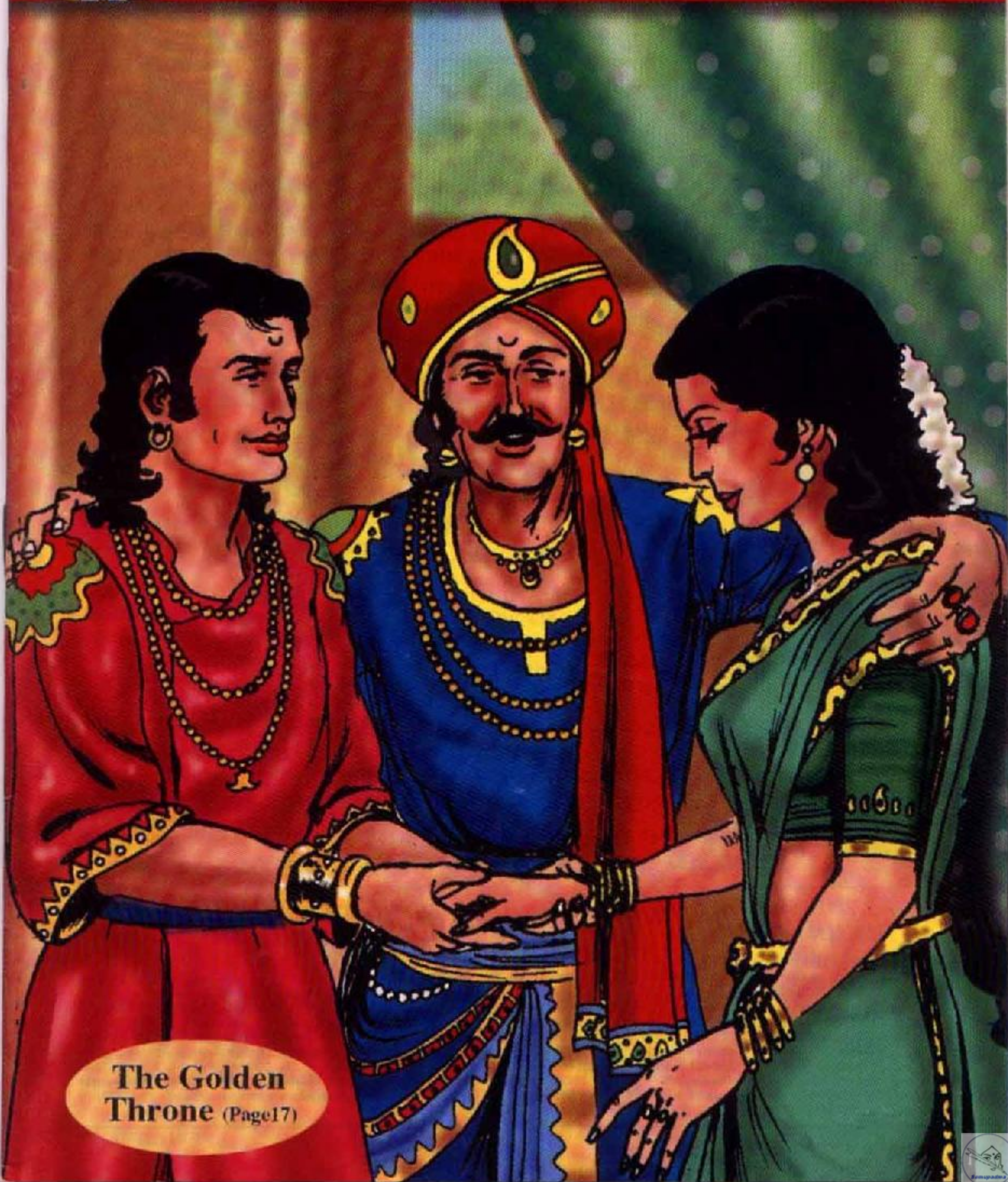




February 2000-Rs.10

CHANDAMAMA



The Golden
Throne (Page17)



THE LAST CENTURY'S HALL OF FAME
IS STUDED WITH MANY A NAME
OF A GREAT ONE WHO DREAMED AND DID
AND WHO LIKE YOU WAS ONCE A KID...



MARTIN SHOWED
MIGHT ISN'T RIGHT
THOMAS INVENTED
THE ELECTRIC LIGHT



MOHANDAS SET HIS PEOPLE FREE
THE LUMIERE BOYS SHOT THE FIRST MOVIE

NELSON TOOK
HIS NATION FAR
HENRY MADE
A MOTOR CAR



CASSIUS PROVED
HE WAS THE BEST
EDMUND CLIMBED
MT. EVEREST



TERESA EASED THE
SICK MAN'S WOES
BILL GAVE THE
WORLD WINDOWS



I.T.Kids
GROWING UP WITH COMPUTERS

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CHANDAMAMA

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February 2000

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The Saga of India

THE BRIDE IN THE CASKET



Unsolved Mysteries



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and educative —
inviting your
participation.

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FAR AWAY



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Founded by

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FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

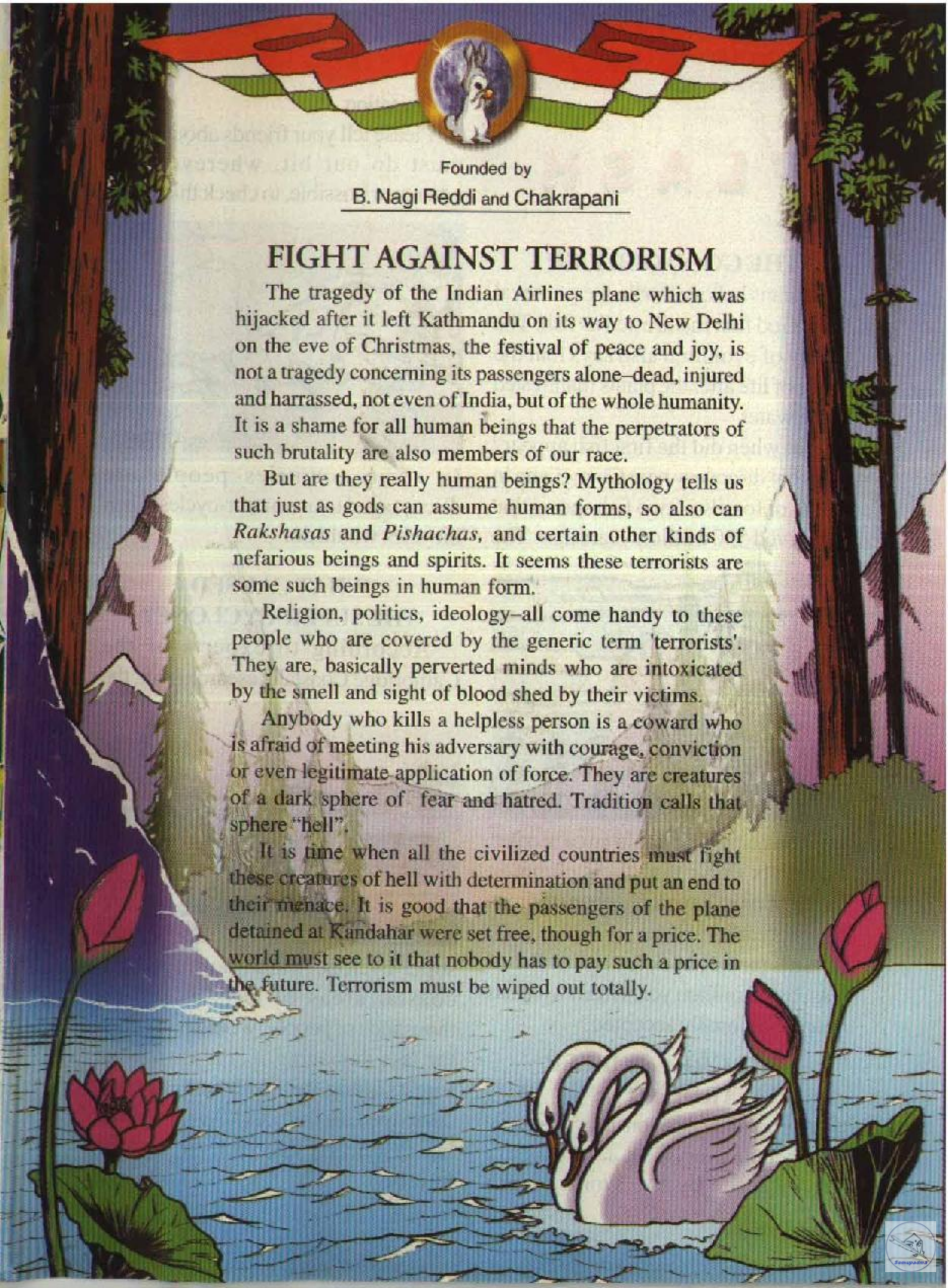
The tragedy of the Indian Airlines plane which was hijacked after it left Kathmandu on its way to New Delhi on the eve of Christmas, the festival of peace and joy, is not a tragedy concerning its passengers alone—dead, injured and harrassed, not even of India, but of the whole humanity. It is a shame for all human beings that the perpetrators of such brutality are also members of our race.

But are they really human beings? Mythology tells us that just as gods can assume human forms, so also can *Rakshasas* and *Pishachas*, and certain other kinds of nefarious beings and spirits. It seems these terrorists are some such beings in human form.

Religion, politics, ideology—all come handy to these people who are covered by the generic term 'terrorists'. They are, basically perverted minds who are intoxicated by the smell and sight of blood shed by their victims.

Anybody who kills a helpless person is a coward who is afraid of meeting his adversary with courage, conviction or even legitimate application of force. They are creatures of a dark sphere of fear and hatred. Tradition calls that sphere "hell".

It is time when all the civilized countries must fight these creatures of hell with determination and put an end to their menace. It is good that the passengers of the plane detained at Kandahar were set free, though for a price. The world must see to it that nobody has to pay such a price in the future. Terrorism must be wiped out totally.



NEWS FLASH

THE GOOD OLD FISH

Indians believe that in the primeval time, God first manifested as fish. The theory of evolution also says that the phase of life after the plants manifested in the water.

But when did the first fish appear? A recent discovery near Chengjiang in China of fossils of two fish shows that they lived 530 million years ago. The



two fish being different from each other, scientists think that their common ancestor must have lived even millions of years earlier!

This pushes back the age of fish at least by 50 million years from what has been traditionally accepted.

THE GREAT KILLER AROUND US

Air pollution kills on an average one lakh people every year, according to a survey made by the World Health

Organisation.

Please tell your friends about it. We must do our bit, wherever and whenever possible, to check this killer.



In some countries people are discouraged to use motor-cycles when bicycles would do.

WHAT CAUSED THE SUPER-CYCLONE?

According to experts of the Cambridge Coastal Research Unit, the



super-cyclone which destroyed the coastal areas of Orissa, killing thousands of people, would have been far less damaging if the mangrove forests along the coast had not been destroyed. In the past 40 years, India has lost nearly half of its mangrove forests.

The one who is known as the Mother today—one who carried forward the work of Sri Aurobindo—was born in Paris on the 21st of February 1878. Even when she was a child, she knew her mission in life was something extraordinary.

In the year 1914, she came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo. At once she realised that he whom she saw was the embodiment of a great consciousness—one who could see the future of mankind. In 1920, the Mother returned to Pondicherry, never to leave it again. With her final coming, the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo grew, in the manner of children crowding around their Mother.

Sri Aurobindo's vision of man is something different, something new. According to him, man, till today dominated by his mind, can rise to yet another high stage in evolution. He can go beyond mind. The mental human race of today can become a supramental race, a divine humanity.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did their Yoga to clear the path for the advent of a new humanity. Needless to

BORN

THIS MONTH

say, their action was in the field of consciousness. One day mankind will grow up into a new consciousness.

A passage from the Mother: "There is an ascending evolution in Nature which goes from the stone to the plant,

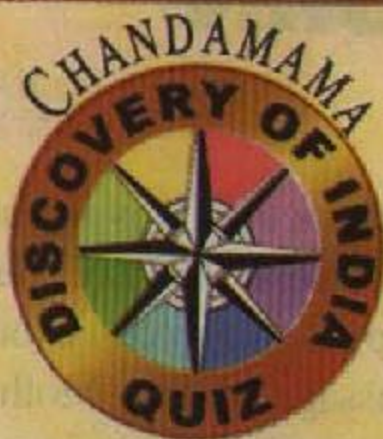
from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on

THE MOTHER



earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will remain a man in its external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance."





Answers to January Quiz

1. Queen Padmini and Rana Ratan Singh of Mewar (Udaipur). The invader was Alaudin Khilji. The incident happened in 1302.
2. a. First cousins;
b. Jarasandha is Kamsa's father-in-law;
c. Step-brothers;
d. Kripacharya is Aswathama's maternal uncle;
e. Step-brothers.
3. i) The *Panchatantra* by Vishnu Sharma;
ii) *Brihatkatha* by Gunadhya, from which Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara* is derived;
iii) *Budhajataka* Stories;
iv) The *Bhagavad Gita*;
iv) Vedas, Upanishads, Epics (The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*) and the Puranas.

Creative Contests

CHANDAMAMA INVITES ITS READERS

to participate in creative exercises of their imaginative-ness and quest in the following fields.



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

1. For the Photo-caption contest page, budding photographers can send a pair of pictures, both related to each other in some way. The photographer's own explanation of the relationship must accompany the submission.

For the selected photographs (pair),
the reward is Rs. 500.

Photos can be submitted any time.



2. Readers can submit an anecdote or an experience of their own or a story (old or new) which will explain a proverb or a phrase announced by your magazine, in 150-175 words. Please remember that your submission must have a story element in it, but not the original story from which the proverb is derived.

**The proverb for the present is:
"A stitch in time saves nine"**

For the selected submission, a reward of
Rs. 500 will be given.

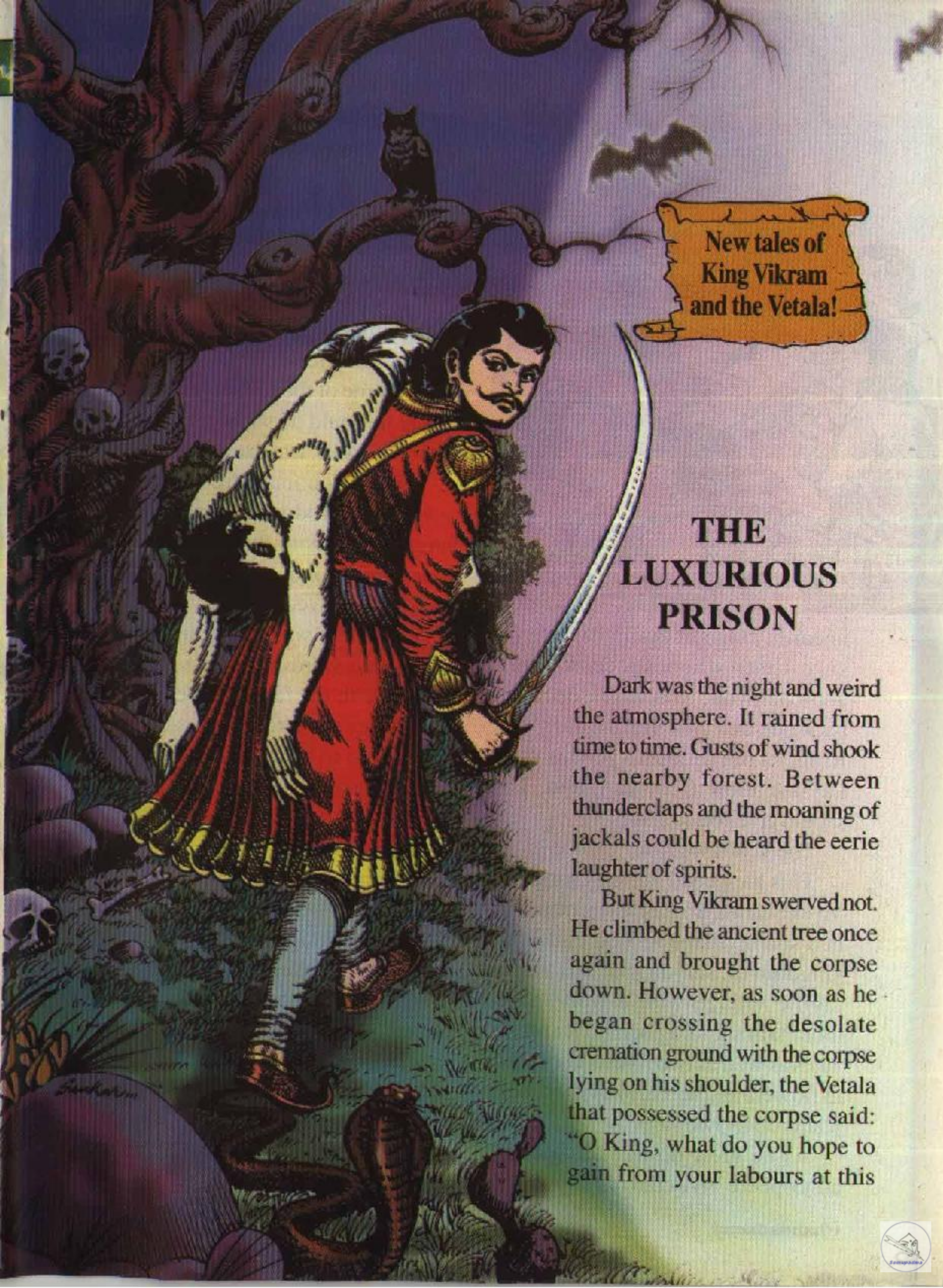
**Submissions must reach by the end of
February 2000 and the winning piece will be
published in the May 2000 issue.**

Address your entries to:

CHANDAMAMA CREATIVE CONTESTS,
CHANDAMAMA BUILDING, VADAPALANI, CHENNAI-600 026

— Editor





New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala!

THE LUXURIOUS PRISON

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forest. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the Vetala that possessed the corpse said: "O King, what do you hope to gain from your labours at this



unearthly hour of the night? Are you sure that, when success would approach you, you won't decide to back out, as Vivek Sharma did? Well, King, let me narrate to you his story. Pay attention to my narration. That should give you some relief."

The Vetala went on:

This happened not very long ago. Vivek Sharma, a bright young man, lived in a small village in a far end of the kingdom of Suryanagar. His was an idyllic village with a well-shaped mountain standing behind it and two lakes as well as two forests abounding in flowers and herbal and other useful plants on its two sides.

As he grew up in that charming atmosphere Vivek did not know when

he had become a poet. In fact, inspiration for composing poetry came to him naturally. One of his uncles was a scholar who understood the value of genuine poetry. He encouraged him and taught him the rules of grammar, versification, style, etc.

The uncle thought of leading the young man to the capital town of Suryanagar. He wanted to introduce him to some of the famous poets. But before he could do so, he died, rather untimely. Vivek was extremely sad.

"Vivek, you must proceed to the town and introduce yourself to the famous poets living there. That is what your uncle proposed to do!" Vivek's friends, who loved his poetry, told him.

"My uncle was well known as a scholar. His words would have carried weight with the famous poets. Why should they pay attention to me? How can I claim to be a poet of any merit without appearing boastful?" replied Vivek.

"Vivek! Do not be naive. Nothing can be achieved without publicity," said his friends.

"I do not agree with you. For achieving excellence in art or poetry, one needs some inborn quality or the Grace of Saraswati the goddess of Learning. Publicity does not help one to achieve; it only makes one's achievements known. But, you, my dear friends, already know whatever little I have achieved. I have no desire



to become more widely known," said Vivek.

"But, everybody knows that our King Jiwan Verma is himself a poet and a patron of poets. Once he comes to know about your talent, he will patronise you. You can then devote all your time to writing, without bothering about the material needs of life," his well-wishers told him.

"True, but I cannot force my way to the king's notice. If he happens to appreciate my poetry some day, in some natural way, I will consider that my good luck," said Vivek.

Good luck almost knocked on his door when the king announced that he was looking for some poets who would join him in composing a Mahakavya or epic. Poets who were willing to collaborate with the king were invited to meet him.

This time Vivek's well-wishers compelled him to proceed to the capital and meet the king. He was received courteously by the king. He placed some of his poems before the king. The king glanced through them and appeared impressed.

"My young friend, here are some poems by me. Go through them. I shall go through your poems. We'll meet after a week," said the king, sending him to a colony called Kavyapuri.

Kavyapuri consisted of a cluster of guest-houses as well as regular lodges allotted to poets and philosophers to



live with their families. Vivek was delighted to learn that all those who were allowed to live in that colony were maintained by the king. They lived quite luxuriously.

Vivek read the king's poems and found that they were only slightly better than ordinary verses. He went through them during the first evening itself. For the next six days he had nothing much to do except talking to the residents of Kavyapuri. He read their poems and discussed philosophy with them. To his surprise he saw them to be highly gifted poets and brilliant philosophers. He was very happy to talk to them.

"The king is a great lover of poetry and philosophy. Whatever we write, he





treasures them. He rewards us for them," some of the poets told him.

Another time a courtier whom he had befriended told him: "The king wishes all his subjects to appreciate and enjoy good poetry. He has recently appointed a full dozen men who possess good voices and who can pronounce words well, to recite poems of their choice at different institutions on festive occasions."

Soon Vivek met one such person. "Which are the poems you like to recite?" he asked him.

"Mostly the poems written by the king himself," answered the reciter. "They are excellent."

Vivek talked to him at length and realised that he had not much

knowledge of poetry and he was not aware of the elements which are indispensable for genuine poetry.

He saw three or four philosophers of the Kavyapuri colony busy in preparing an essay. On enquiry he learnt that the king was to participate in a conference of scholars at Varanasi. They were improving upon what the king had written for that purpose.

Vivek was very much liked by the other poets. They said that they would be happy if he also became a resident of Kavyapuri.

"You do not find many kings who love and respect poetry and poets as King Jiwan Verma does. Why not take advantage of his munificence?" they suggested. Vivek smiled and thanked them for their advice.

On the seventh day he met the king. "How did you like my poetry?" asked the king.

"My lord, I do not know of another king who is so much interested in poetry. This humble subject of yours congratulates you. May the goddess of learning shower Her blessings on you," said Vivek.

"Thanks. I like your poems very much. You are fit to collaborate with me in writing an epic like the other chosen poets who are the residents of the Kavyapuri colony. You are most welcome to stay in that colony. All your needs will be looked after well," said the king.



"My lord, I beg your pardon. I have a strange weakness. I can never write a poem when I am away from my village. I realised this after coming here," said Vivek humbly.

"I see. That's very unfortunate," remarked the king sympathetically. He gave Vivek a handsome reward and Vivek returned home happily.

The Vetala paused for a moment and then demanded of King Vikram in a challenging tone, "O King, was not Vivek's conduct strange? Why did he avoid accepting the king's patronage? Did he not praise the king? Why then did he refuse to collaborate with him in his project for an epic? Answer me if you can. Should you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answer, your head would roll off your neck!"

Forthwith replied King Vikram: "Vivek praised the king, but cleverly avoided praising his poetry, he had realised that while the king was not a gifted poet or a philosopher, he wanted to pass on as the greatest poet and philosopher in his kingdom. However,

the king had the capacity to know who were good poets and good philosophers. He had brought them together into a luxurious prison. Once accustomed to enjoying good food and careless living, they were reluctant to leave their shelter. They also enjoyed one another's company. The king showered equal favour on all. So there was no envy, no rivalry among them. What they wrote was treasured by the king. The people had no chance to read them or hear them. The reciters were eager to please the king. Even though the king did not ask them to choose only his poems for reciting in the public, they read only the king's poems, because the king maintained them. We have seen that Vivek had no particular attraction for fame or publicity. His joy lay in his ability to compose poetry. That joy would completely dry up if he accepted the king's offer. That explains his conduct."

No sooner had King Vikram concluded his answer than the Vetala, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.



THE FRIENDLY MIRROR



In a certain gurukul lived so many students. Among them was Jaipal. He was quite normal in all human qualities, but his face looked distorted and ugly to the ordinary eyes. His friends laughed behind him and caricatured him. Jaipal was sad.

"Listen to me, boys, every feature has its beauty and its own harmony. Your sights are imperfect. Secondly, you have a very limited notion of what is beautiful and what is not. That is why you cannot see any beauty in Jaipal's face. When you look at him or talk to him, know that he too, like you, is a creature created by God. Unknown to you, there is reason why God made him like that. Once this truth dominates your vision, you will find in him an excellent friend and you will love him. Once you love him, he will look absolutely normal to you, if not handsome." The guru would tell the students.

Some would be influenced by the guru's advice and some would find it beyond them. Jaipal continued to be sad.

One day Jaipal was going through the

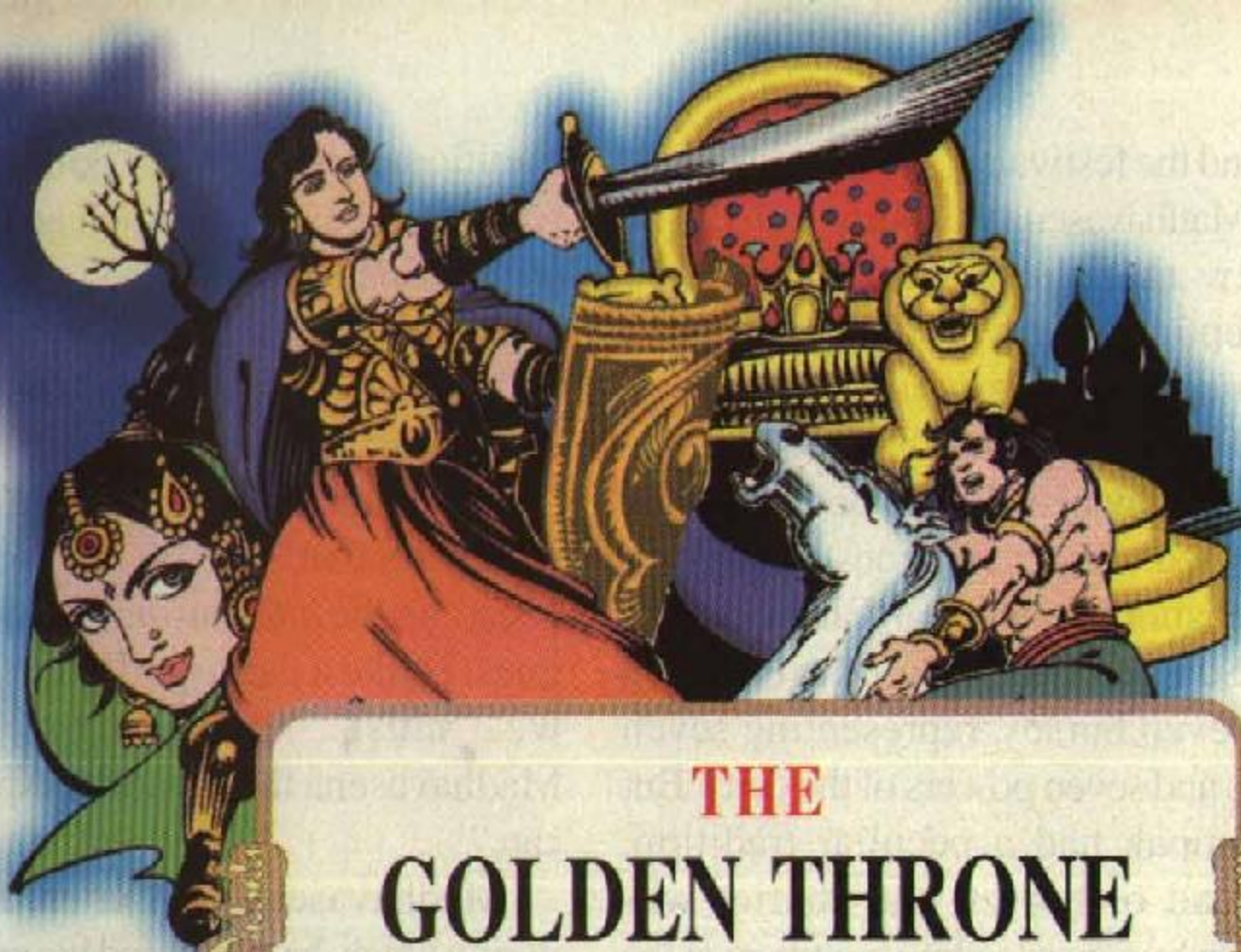
bazaar when he saw a mirror lying by the side of the road in front of a shop. He picked it up and asked the shopkeeper if it had been left outside by mistake.

"No, boy, I just threw it out because its glass is defective. It reflects one's face in a distorted manner," said the shopkeeper.

Jaipal looked into the glass. His face looked charming. The peculiarity of the glass gave his face a new look. He gazed at it for long and carried it to the gurukul.

Did the mirror show something untrue? By and by he realised that the mirror could not reflect what was not there in front of it. The harmony and charm he saw were there in him - and the mirror had only rearranged them.

He grew more and more inward - concentrating on his inner qualities - and stopped, in a natural way, caring about what others saw in his appearance. Surprisingly, by and by the others seemed to have stopped noticing anything abnormal in his appearance.



THE GOLDEN THRONE

[The story so far: Pourasvata, the King of Kaundinya, conquered all the major kingdoms of southern India and became an emperor. But by the time Sridatta, the tenth descendent of Pourasvata ascended the throne, all the kings paying tribute to Kaundinya declared independence, by and by.]

Sridatta's son, Vijaydatta, was engaged to marry Srilekha, the princess of Kalindi. But while he was at the Gurukul, his father urgently summoned him and told him that the rulers of the three major neighbouring kingdoms were conspiring to invade Kaundinya and their palace in order to plunder its legendary treasure.]

King Sridatta went on with his report: "When Maralabhupati, the King of Champak, learnt that his son Chakrabhupati was interested in marrying Princess Srilekha of Kalindi, he neither encouraged nor discouraged him. Meanwhile, he secretly began to enquire about Madhavasena, King of Kalindi.

The enquiry revealed that Madhavasena was a greedy man. He coveted the wealth of others and was

never tired of acquiring more and more gold and jewellery in his personal treasury.

Maralabhupati decided to take advantage of this weakness of Madhavasena.

In the city of Champak there was an ancient Sun temple. The annual car festival of the Sun-god was usually a grand affair in Champak. Maralabhupati sent a warm invitation to Madhavasena and his family to

2. The Damsel in Distress

attend the festival.

Madhavasena was surprised. But he knew that there was no harm in accepting the invitation. He came to Champak with his family.

The auspicious day for the Car festival dawned. The golden idol of the Sun-god was ceremoniously placed on the chariot. Elsewhere in Bharatavarsha the Sun-god's chariot used to be drawn by seven horses, representing seven hues and seven powers of the deity. But Champak had a peculiar tradition. Instead of horses, the chariot was drawn by seven leading members of the royal family, including the king and the crown-prince.

This time, as a special case, King Madhavasena was given a place among the seven. The rope to draw the car was tied around his waist too, between Maralabhupati and Chakrabhupati.

The people discussed in hushed tone about this new turn given to the

traditional ritual. What could be the reason for bestowing such an honour on the King of Kalindi?

Maralabhupati looked at the nobles and said in a voice which others, too, could hear: "The noble king of Kalindi is here in order to participate in this sacred festival. He is our honoured guest. As the *dharmashastra* says, the guest is like a demi-god. That is why we must shower on King Madhavasena the greatest respect we can."

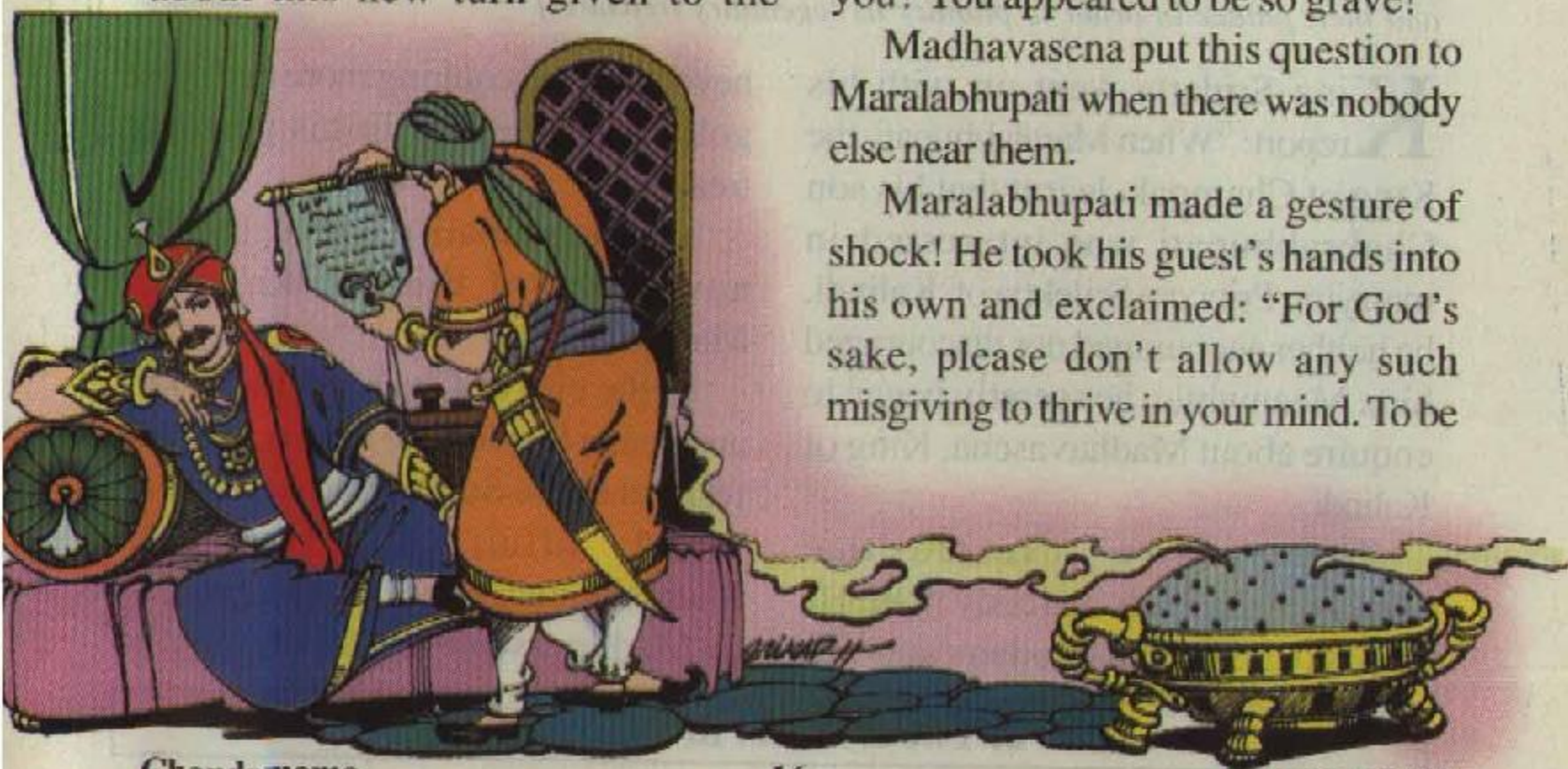
Madhavasena felt flattered. Later during lunch, he expressed his gratitude to his hosts for the honour extended to him.

While Madhavasena was praising Maralabhupati profusely, Maralabhupati was only nodding. Madhavasena expected him at least to smile!

"My noble host, did I speak anything wrong while expressing my gratitude to you? You appeared to be so grave!"

Madhavasena put this question to Maralabhupati when there was nobody else near them.

Maralabhupati made a gesture of shock! He took his guest's hands into his own and exclaimed: "For God's sake, please don't allow any such misgiving to thrive in your mind. To be



frank, I was absorbed in some other thought. I'm not sure whether I should tell you anything about that or not."

"My dear friend, why should you hesitate? Don't you have trust in me?" asked Madhavasena.

"Well, my noble guest, I've a fond wish to express before you. But assure me that you will fulfil it, that you will not disappoint me."

Madhavasena's brows were raised. He was surprised as well as amused. "Tell me, please," he said.

"Please pardon me, if I am causing you any discomfort. It is like this: your daughter, Srilekha, is extremely beautiful and my son Chakra has heard much about her. He is enamoured of her. He insists that I broach to you the proposal of his marriage with her. I told him that King Madhavasena is a dear friend of King Sridatta of Kaundinya. It is possible that the princess would wish to marry the prince of Kaundinya, Vijayadatta. But do you know what my son said? He said that Kaundinya might have seen powerful kings once upon a time. But the tradition of the princely caste is, whoever has the necessary valour and power deserves to dominate others. Princess Srilekha will never regret her marriage with me. I propose to conquer several kingdoms and make her the empress over them, while I become the emperor. I will be like a son to her father, King Madhavasena, since he has no son. I will offer to him half of my empire and half of the wealth



I get through my conquests."

King Maralabhupati continued: "My noble guest, I could not dismiss my son's righteous ambition. After all, he is able and intelligent. However, I advised him to have patience and promised that I will talk to you about it.

The proposal was so unexpected that Madhavasena sat stunned for a while. But, by and by, he began to dream of a heroic son-in-law who would give him new territories and heap before him the wealth obtained from other countries! He forgot that this is an issue which must be discussed with his wife and daughter!

During the following hours, Madhavasena was completely won over by Maralabhupati.



All this news had been received by King Sridatta through his most efficient spies. He then told his son, Vijayadatta, "Now you can understand why I summoned you so urgently. I knew that your guru would not like you to come away before the Navaratri celebrations at the Gurukul, but I needed to discuss these unexpected developments with you as soon as possible.

"As you know, Madhavasena will pay a visit to us, as he has been doing year after year, for the Chaitra festival. Between him and Maralabhupati it has been decided that, he will assess our military strength during his stay here. Soon thereafter the armies of Kalindi, Champak and Kunde will gather at a certain place. Special training will be given to them according to the strategy

the leaders will decide. That will be the rainy season. They think that the army movement will be easy, hiding from the public gaze along the hilly path.

"My son, they must be already preparing for the invasion. What a pity that our peaceful kingdom should become a bloody battlefield before long. On getting the detailed report from our worthy chief of intelligence service, I was disheartened. How could we face the combined challenge of three kings and their specially trained armies? However, soon I gathered hope and courage. I requested Rajguru Sivananda, a gifted astrologer, to examine your horoscope to see what is there in store for you. He studied it with great concentration, but did not say anything to me immediately. He sat in meditation. In his vision

appeared a rising sun, a huge serpent with its hood raised which glittered like gold. He also saw six maidens. He described to me his vision and said, 'My lord, the prince has a great future. No doubt, he will encounter some problems temporarily, but he will get over them without much difficulty. He will emerge victorious in every sphere. But please ask him to return to the palace before the full-moon. My calculation shows that he will hit upon a hidden treasure. In his presence we have to dig at a spot-where I will be led to pour my *mantrik* water-on the eastern side of our city.' I was already thinking of calling you. The Rajguru's advice obliged me to hurry up."

"But, father, should we divert our

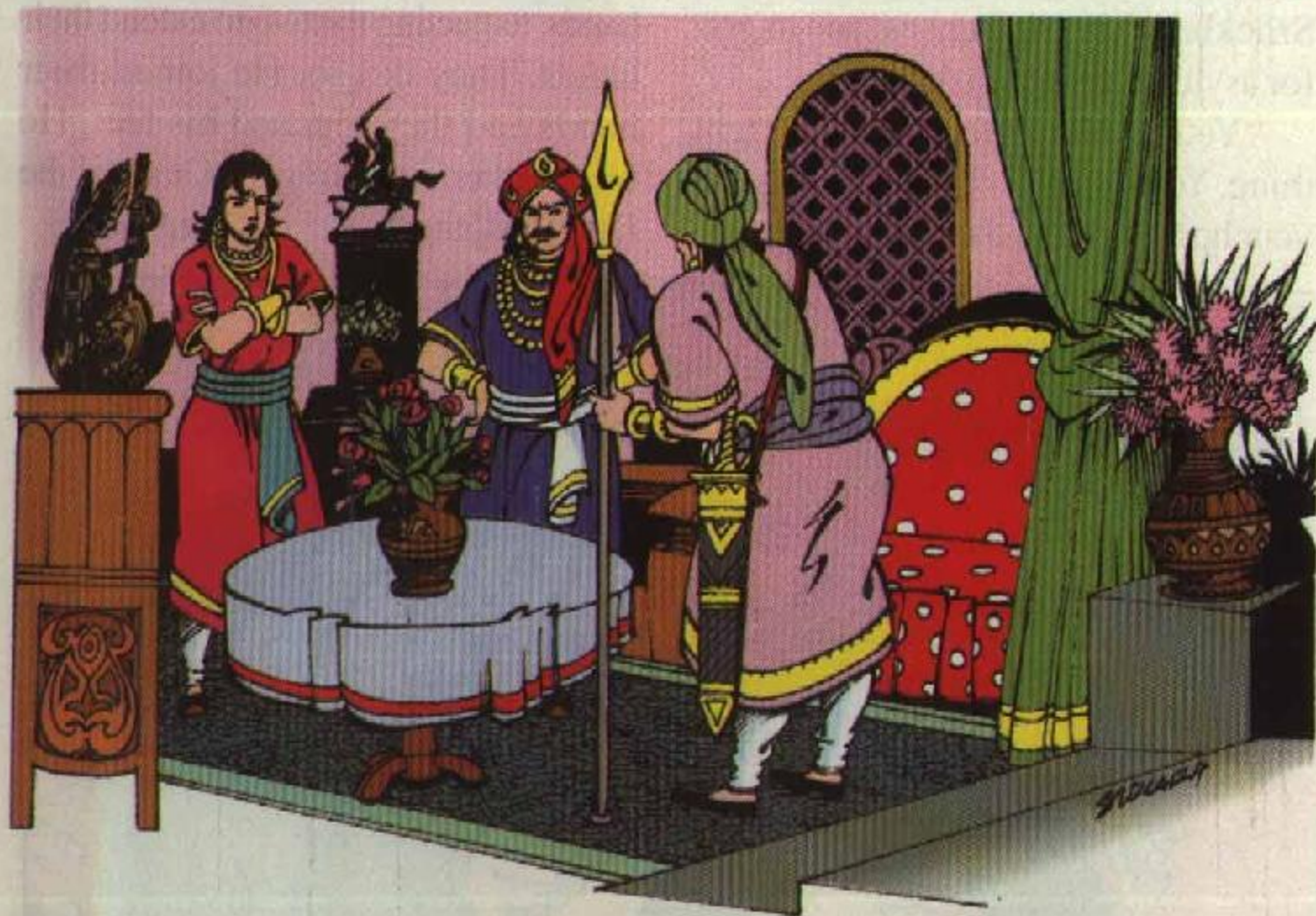
attention to digging for wealth when the enemy is knocking on our door?" asked Vijayadatta.

"Well, my boy, I too said the same thing to Sivananda. But he believes that the wealth we are to find will bring us good luck. And the process should not take more than three days," said King Sridatta.

"Father, we haven't harmed anybody. We had goodwill for all our neighbouring kingdoms. If they try to ruin us, it is within our right to see that they are ruined in turn," said Vijayadatta in a spirit of grim determination.

The king nodded in appreciation of his son's mood.

Just then someone appeared behind the screen. "Who is it?" asked the king.



The screen parted and the king's personal bodyguard saluted the father and son. "A young man says that he has bought an urgent message from Lakshmi Devi. He must personally deliver it to you—and immediately!"

"Lakshmi Devi? I don't understand. All right, let him come," said the king.

The youth who entered the room stood still looking at Vijayadatta and smiled sadly. Vijayadatta looked intensely into the visitor's eyes and stood up.

"Father, don't you recognise the youth? She is..."

"Srilekha!" exclaimed the king. "My child! What made you put on the disguise?"

"Uncle!" answered a weeping Srilekha. "My mother sent me to you for asylum. We are in distress."

"Your wise mother did the right thing. You aren't a refugee here; this is your home. You've the right to be here—

you'll have the right to command this household," announced the king.

Srilekha kept looking at him, tears drizzling in her eyes.

"Look here, my daughter, I propose to make you my daughter-in-law at once!"

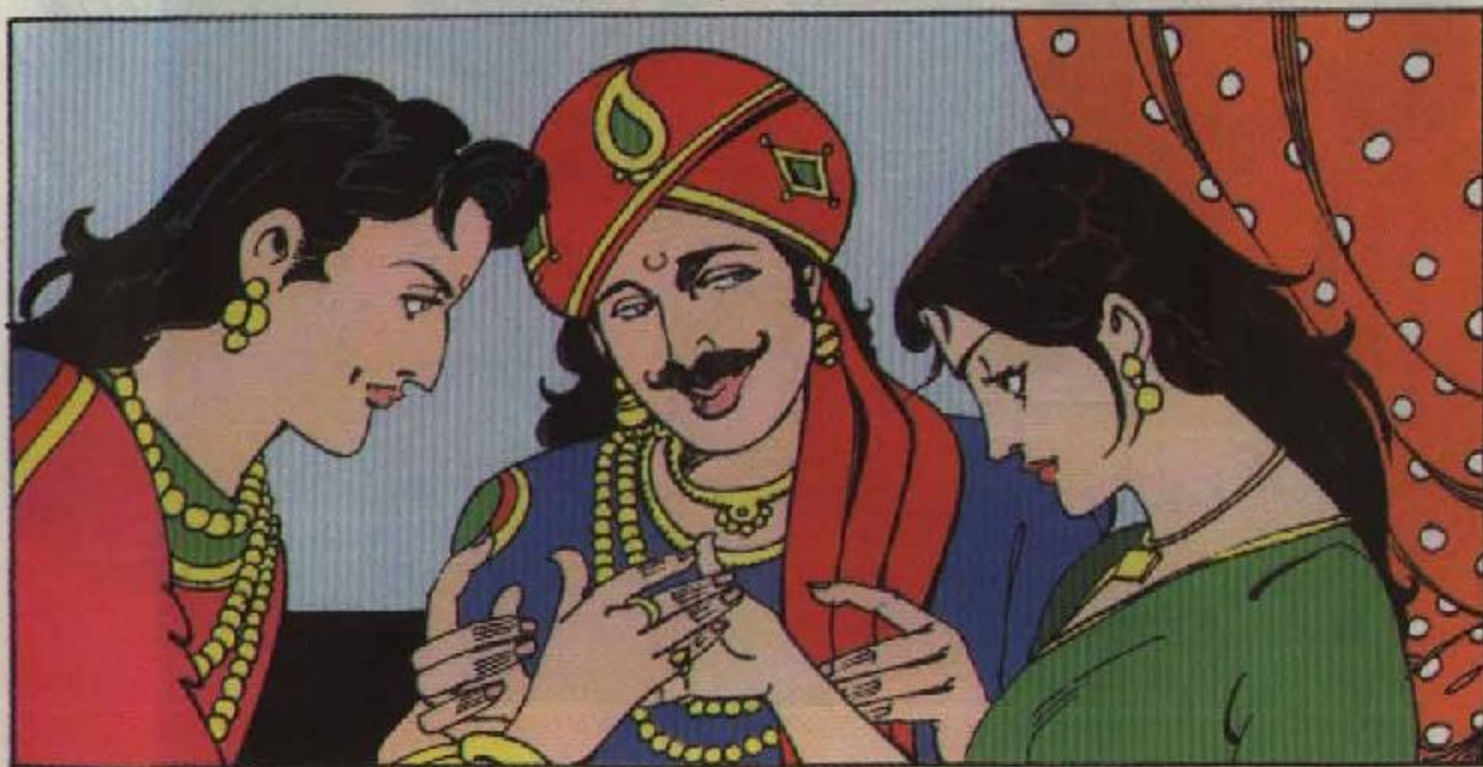
Both Srilekha and Vijayadatta gave a start.

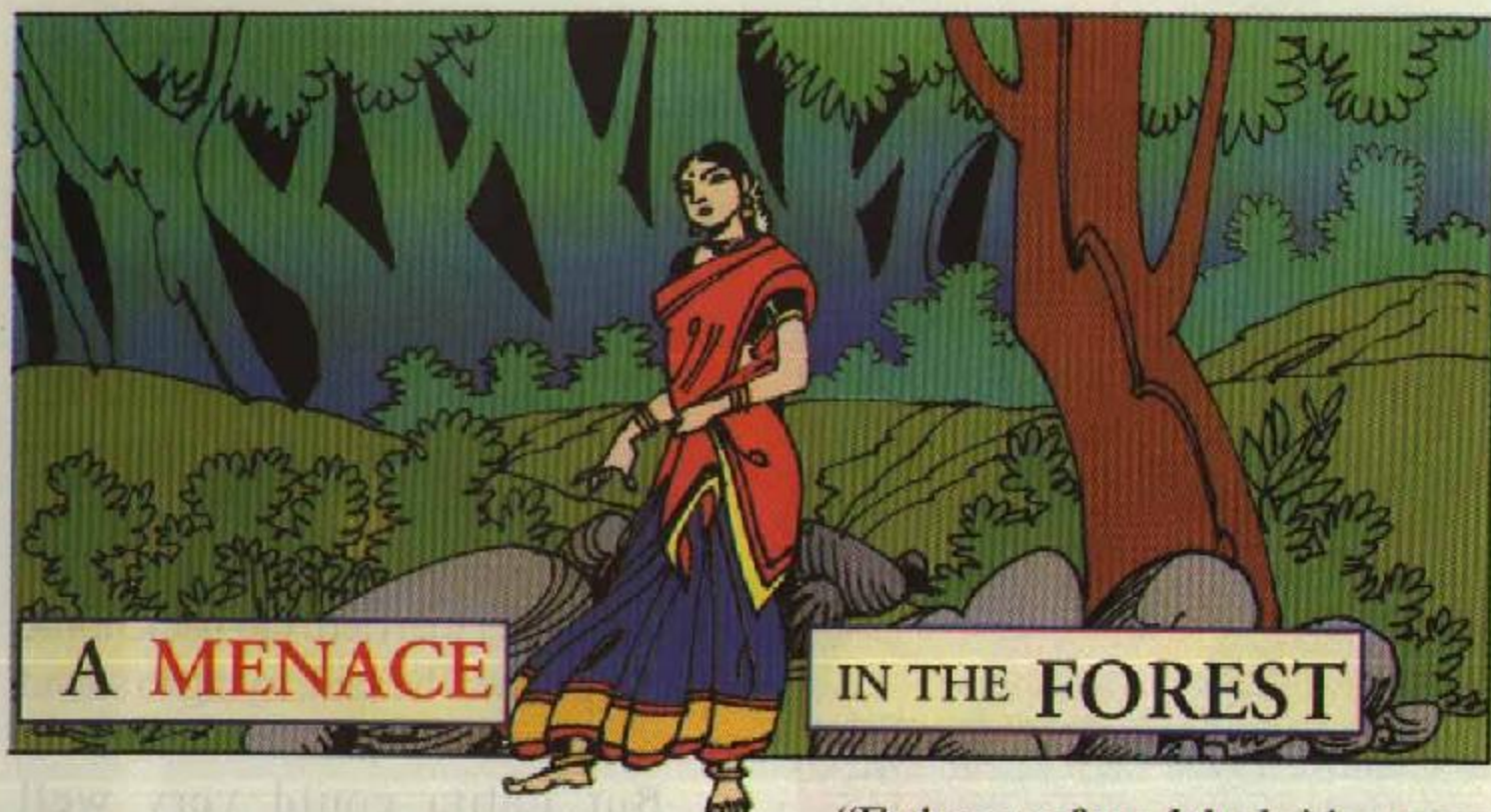
The king spoke like one who had been inspired, "For the Kshatriyas, the *gundharva* way of wedding is perfectly acceptable—more so in an emergency. I propose that you both wed just now, right before my eyes. Don't you agree to my suggestion?"

Srilekha blushed. Vijayadatta lowered his eyes. But both smiled.

"Come on!" The king spread out his hands, expecting the two to extend their hands. They did so. He joined their hands and they touched his feet. He blessed them invoking the Grace of the Divine Mother.

(To continue)





"Father, when will you come back home?" little Lalita asked Raman when he was leaving for the town to try his luck.

"I'll come back, my child, when I've earned enough to perform your marriage!" replied Raman, smiling.

"Will you marry me to Sudhir?" asked Lalita innocently, pointing at the boy flying a kite standing on a nearby field. Sudhir was handsome and intelligent. He was on a visit to their house along with his mother who was a distant cousin of Raman.

"Well, my child, I've to earn more than I can foresee for that match, but I'll try," said Raman.

Raman met with success in his business venture. Within a few years he grew very rich.

He was back in his village. "Lalita, I must find a bridegroom for you!" he told his daughter, one day.

"Father, we found the bridgeroom together before you left for the town, didn't we?" reminded Lalita, blushing.

Raman found out, by and by, that Sudhir had frequented their house and had become very friendly with Lalita.

"It is all right, Lalita. I'll finalise the date," he said.

The next day he left for Sudhir's village. Lalita and her mother waited for him to return with happiness. But they were surprised to see him looking gloomy and tired.

"It won't be possible for Lalita to marry Sudhir," he announced curtly to his wife and Lalita, and felt silent. Only after the mother and daughter shed tears at his strange statement that he came out with the fact: "Since three months Sudhir, has become a hermit. He lives in a hut on the river bank at the western end of the forest, all alone. He refuses to come home. If anybody insists, he threatens to throw himself into the river."



Gloom fell on Raman's household. But as soon as everybody was asleep, Lalita sneaked out of the house.

It was a moonlit night, though clouds were gathering in parts of the sky. She walked into the forest and, after a long search, she located the hut on the river.

The door of the hut was bolted from inside. She called out for Sudhir and banged on the door, but no response came.

She found a window and peeped through it. What she saw astounded her. On the bed lay an eagle, not Sudhir! She left the place, but had only walked a little when a storm broke out. She took shelter under a banyan tree. The storm subsided. But she could hear the roar of a tiger. She returned to the hut and sat in front of it waiting for the dawn.

The door opened at dawn and Sudhir stepped out. He was as astounded to see Lalita as she was to find him instead of the eagle.

"What does this mean? Nobody was inside the hut but for an eagle! Where were you hiding?" she asked.

"Lalita, there's no use my answering your question. Know that I'm doomed to live alone for the rest of my life. We can never get married. Go back home and forget me," he said, trying to sound very harsh.

But Lalita could very well understand that he was suppressing his sobs. "I'll never do as you say. I must learn your secret. Don't forget that I'm betrothed to you," said Lalita firmly.

Wiping his tears, Sudhir narrated his strange misfortune. One day, it appears, he was on his way to meet her. As it was late in the day, he took a short cut through the forest. But he lost his way and it became dark.

Under a tree, on a cot, sat a woman who was combing her copper-coloured hair. Sudhir could not see her face.

"Hello, sister, how do I cross the forest?" he asked.

The woman turned and looked at Sudhir. Sudhir took a step back. She looked horrible. Her nose was like an eagle's beak.

"Why are you in a hurry, young man?" she asked.

"To be frank, I'm going to meet the girl who is to marry me," replied Sudhir.

"That's no longer necessary! That



girl cannot be a better bride than myself! Come on, let's get married! I like you already!"

"Shut up, you eagle-nosed witch!" shouted Sudhir.

"So, you know that I am a witch and you find me eagle-nosed. Very well, now you must know what a witch can do. You'll turn into an eagle at night and remain so till it is dawn. I have killed so many young men who insulted me. But I shall spare you your life. Maybe one day you'll agree to marry me!"

Then she said as if to herself, "After all I cannot go on killing all my prospective bridegrooms!"

He walked away as fast as he could. He had reached the end of the forest when it became evening. Lo! and behold, at once he turned into an eagle.

He spent the night on a tree. At daybreak he became himself again. He found a deserted hut, repaired it, and began to live in it. His kinsmen searched for him and discovered him. He told them that he had become a hermit and would never return home.

"All right," said Lalita and, without another word, re-entered the forest. She had formed an idea about the witch's location from what Sudhir told her.

By mid-day she was able to find the witch. The witch was sitting on her cot, munching nuts.

"Hello, my dear sister, why are you munching nuts when you should have a regular lunch?" asked Lalita, sitting



beside her.

"Who are you?" asked the witch.

"So far as you're concerned, I'm your younger sister. But I see you're all alone! What about my brother-in-law?" asked Lalita.

"You're still to have a brother-in-law. That is to say, I am still looking for a suitable match," said the witch.

"Are you? In that case I am lucky. You see, you have a wonderful eagle-nose! I've a cousin who once dreamt of a lady possessing an eagle-nose. He fell in love with her. He insists that he would either marry a lady with an eagle-nose or would remain a bachelor."

While Lalita was saying this, a boar happened to pass by. The witch picked up a pebble and blowed on it and threw it on it. At once the boar changed into a lizard.



"Marvellous! Now, my sister, can you change it into the boar again?" asked Lalita.

"I cannot. A wizard who trained me, first taught me how to become a bird or a serpent. He also taught me several harmful *mantras*. Before I could learn how to undo the harms, he accidentally slipped into the river and was carried away by a crocodile."

"Do you mean to say the boar can never get back its true form?"

"No, I alone can change into any creature at will and then change again into the beauty that I am. However, all my spells will become ineffective when I die or if I am trapped while I'm a bird," said the witch and then hurried to ask, "Where is your cousin?"

"He lives in a hut on the river-bank. He has become a hermit. But once he takes a look at you, he will fall in love with you and become a house-holder."

"Good, let's meet him," said the witch eagerly.

Both went towards Sudhir's hut.

Sudhir was asleep inside.

"Better enter his room as a bird and when he tries to drive you, become yourself. That will be such a pleasant surprise for him!" proposed Lalita. She had planned to trap her as soon as she became a bird.

"A good idea. But a better idea would be to become a snake and surprise him," said the witch, keeping with her evil mind.

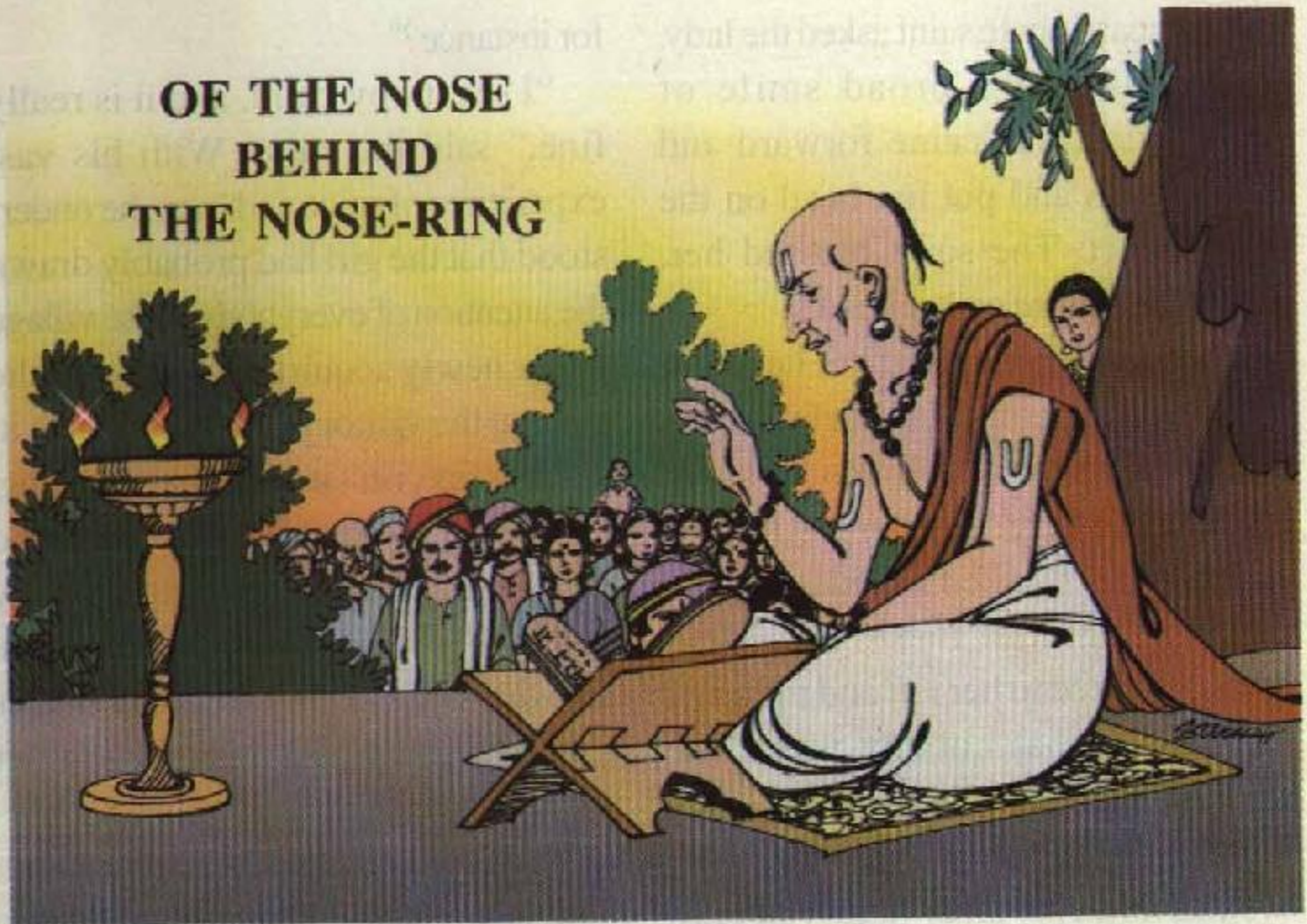
She became a snake and crept into Sudhir's room. The sun had just set and Sudhir had just turned into an eagle. The moment the eagle saw the snake, it pounced on it. The snake was killed.

"Thank the Providence. You're saved!" exclaimed Lalita. "The one whom you killed is the witch. Her spells would now become ineffective."

"Lalita! You're an angel!" Sudhir exclaimed. He then escorted Lalita to her parents. Their amazing story was a greater entertainment for their wedding guests than the sumptuous feast, music, or dance.



OF THE NOSE BEHIND THE NOSE-RING



The great poet and saint, Tulsi Das, was reading out some cantos from his *Sriramacharitamanasa* in front of a village shrine. He sat on a raised platform, his enchanted audience facing him on the green grass. There were hundreds of them.

When his recitation and discourse were over, the audience began to disperse. Some of them went closer to him and prostrated themselves before him. The saint blessed them.

"Santhji, it's getting late. Let's go home, for I know you would neither eat your dinner nor retire to bed before bathing and doing your Puja and meditation," the village landlord, who was the saint's host, told him politely.

Tulsi Das nodded and stood up, ready to leave. But his eyes fell on a half-veiled young lady standing in a corner of the platform. She obviously hesitated to come near the great man.

"Are you waiting for me, my child?"



The greedy can be won over by money; the stubborn by folding of hands (show of humility); the foolish by flattery, but the learned can be won over only by the truth.

—Hitopadesha



the compassionate saint asked the lady.

Displaying a broad smile of satisfaction, she came forward and knelt down and put her head on the saint's feet. The saint blessed her, placing his palm on her head.

The lady then raised her head but kept looking at the saint, her smile still sticking to her lips. A full minute passed.

"Do you have something to tell me, my daughter?" asked Tulsidas.

"Nothing much, Baba, only..."

She looked to her left and right and made sure that nobody was close enough to them to listen to her.

"Mahatma, do you see anything wonderful on my face?" asked the lady.

"Your face itself is wonderful, my daughter, like the face of any innocent child of the Divine!" was the saint's response.

"I mean, don't you see something conspicuous on my face, something specially wonderful, this new nose-ring,

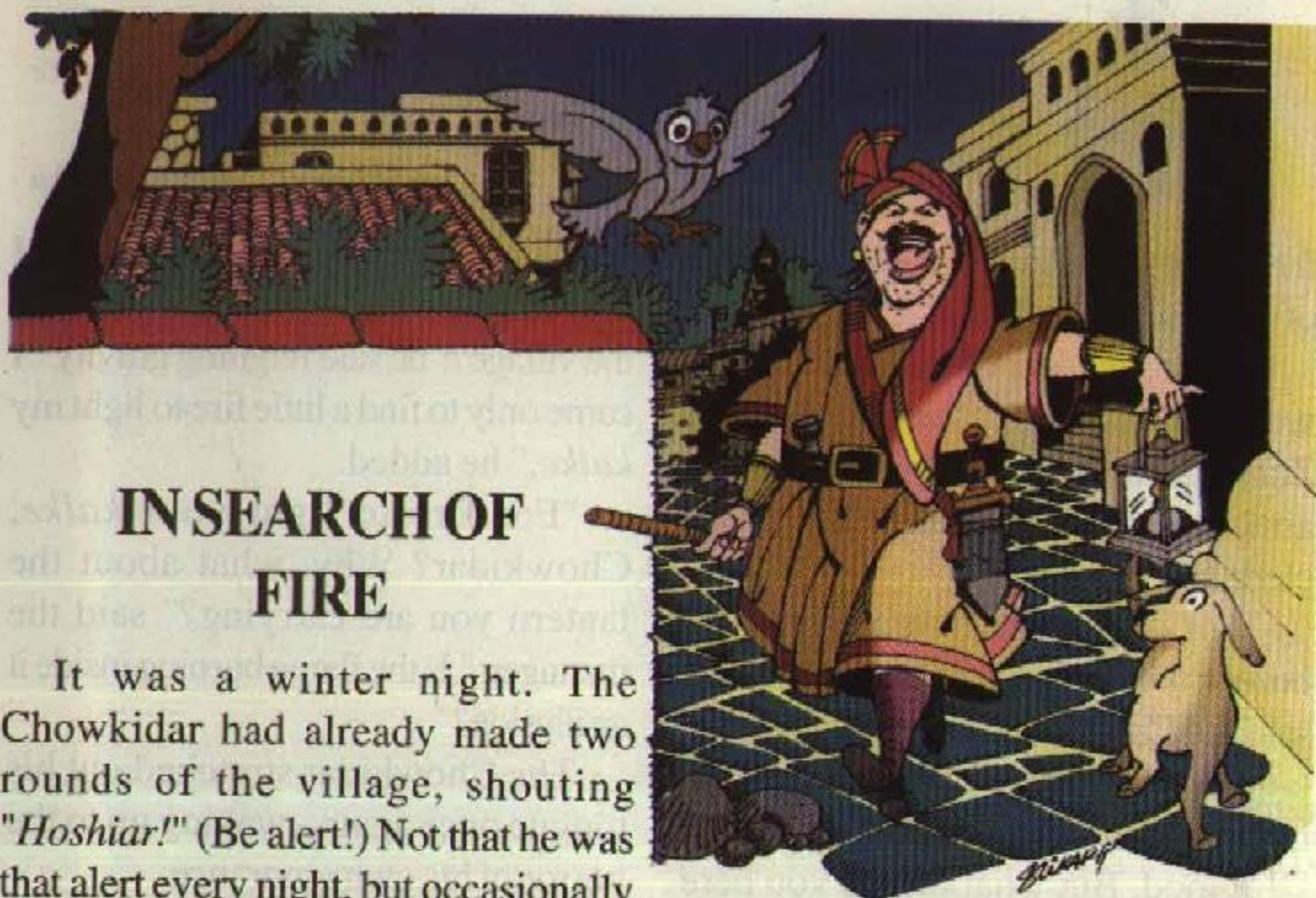
for instance?"

"I see it, my child, and it is really fine," said the saint. With his vast experience of mice and men, he understood that the girl had probably drawn the attention of everybody in the village to her newly acquired wealth and she desired the visitor also to appreciate it.

"It is fine, isn't it?" she said, blushing. "You see, Mahatma, my husband bought it yesterday paying a heavy price. Was it necessary for him to be so extravagant on my account? But, as you so rightly said, it is nice - rather wonderful - isn't it so?"

"It's so, my child," said the saint. "And I'm glad that you feel grateful to your husband for giving you such a precious decoration for your nose. But, my child, have you ever felt grateful to the one who gave you the nose? Henceforth, my sweet, sweet daughter, you must learn to feel that," said the saint as he blessed her.





IN SEARCH OF FIRE

It was a winter night. The Chowkidar had already made two rounds of the village, shouting "*Hoshiar!*" (Be alert!) Not that he was that alert every night, but occasionally he had to sacrifice his sleep when the Zamindar camped at his Kachheri.

He had a *kalke*, a handy earthen pipe through which one smoked tobacco. He filled it with tobacco, but he must light it; unfortunately he had no matchbox with him.

He called out to the inmate of a hut. An old lady opened the bamboo door.

"Can I have a small ember from your oven, Granny?" he asked.

"My son, my oven has not been lighted for days. I am given a meal a day at the Zamindar's kachheri. At night I manage with a handful of *prasad* the temple priest gives me. I rarely cook. How then can I have any embers in my oven?" said the woman.

The Chowkidar moved on to the next house. "Would you lend me your

matchbox?" he asked the man who came out at his call.

"But we don't have any! We had lighted a twig at the neighbour's kitchen for our own cooking. Once all had had their food and the day's chores were over, my wife sprinkled water on the oven to extinguish the fire!" regretfully said the man. "Try at the next house," he advised.

At the next house, it seemed all had fallen asleep and nobody responded to the Chowkidar's call.

"The best thing would be to go to the Kachheri. The Zamindar's staff would still be awake and if chips were still not burning in the oven, someone would surely have a matchbox," he thought and reached the Kachheri, shouting out his *hoshiar* more



The wise should accept right words even from a child. In the absence of the sun, does not a small lamp give light?

—Hitopadesha

frequently to impress the Zamindar's officials with his alertness.

"Hello, our dear Chowkidar! You're watchful indeed!" commented the Zamindar's manager who still sat in an armchair on the verandah, talking to the clerk.

"I'm only your humble servant, huzoor, doing my duty in a humble way!" said the Chowkidar, keeping down his lathi and the lantern on the floor and bowing to the manager.

"Good. But what brings you here now? Do you wish to lie down for a while?"

The Chowkidar stretched out his tongue. "How can I do such a thing,

sir? Do I ever lie down at night? Am I not always on my blessed legs guarding the village?" he said feigning gravity. "I came only to find a little fire to light my *kalke*," he added.

"For fire to light your *kalke*, Chowkidar? Why, what about the lantern you are carrying?" said the manager. "Is the flame burning inside it an illusion?"

The Chowkidar stretched out his tongue once again - waking up to the horror of his own ignorance.

"O God, O my accursed wit! It never struck me that I was carrying fire myself," he grumbled against himself, as the manager and the others laughed.





FARAH'S DESTINATION

Long ago, on the sea-shore in the far west, there nestled a prosperous little city. In it lived a lovely little damsel called Farah, the only daughter of a well-to-do spinner of ropes. Many a hired hand worked for him.

One day, the old man said to his offspring who was the apple of his eye:

"Farah dear, soon I will set sail on trade to several charming realms. Will you accompany me? Who knows, but in the course of our journey you might not find a suitable young man whom you could take as your husband?"

The girl readily agreed, if not for anything else, at least for the thrill of the voyage.

So, they sailed off on a calm blue

sea. From land to land they went, the father busy with his commerce and his daughter dreaming of the handsome prince who might soon hold her hand!

But, alas, in the middle of the sea, they were caught in a terrible storm. It twirled and swirled their ship and threw it upside down with great fury. Most of the crew and the rich old merchant perished there and then. But the fortunate young lady was cast by the mighty waves onto the shores of an unknown island.

Farah, now alone and destitute in a strange land, could remember nothing when she finally regained her consciousness. She was utterly exhausted and her limbs had no strength



left in them. As she lay helpless on the soft sand, blankly looking at the vacant sky above, the scene of the shipwreck and then she being carried on the crest of the waves, dimly floated before her eyes. She began walking with her faltering steps, although without any destination.

It so happened that a family of weavers were passing by. They took her with them, and nursed her back to health with loving care. Though they were poor and humble, they adopted her into their clan and taught her their trade to make cloth. By and by Farah reconciled to her new and second life and was happy.

Some years passed in peace and tranquillity. One day, as Farah was strolling down the beach enjoying the

cool and refreshing breeze, suddenly a band of slave-traders saw her. They forcibly carried her away in their ship to another country and sold her off along with other captives.

Farah's happy and beautiful world collapsed once again. But her new master, who made masts for ships was kind and gentle. He taught her the trade in his woodyard. His new apprentice was clever and learnt everything very fast to the surprise of her employer. So much satisfied was he with her sincere efforts and work that he not only set her free but treated her as his own daughter. Farah was happy once again.

"Now that you are so adept in the trade, I would like you to take up greater responsibilities," said her good master one day.

"I'm ready for it!" answered the young lady confidently.

"Very well. Farah, tomorrow my ship loaded with a cargo of masts will set sail to distant lands. I want you not only to captain it, but to promote our goods," proposed the old mastbuilder.

Farah, a lover of adventure that she was, agreed and with the blessings of her good master set forth on her challenging task. Mid-journey, her ship was caught up in a typhoon and was wrecked and the unfortunate girl found herself again cast up all alone on the shore of a strange land.

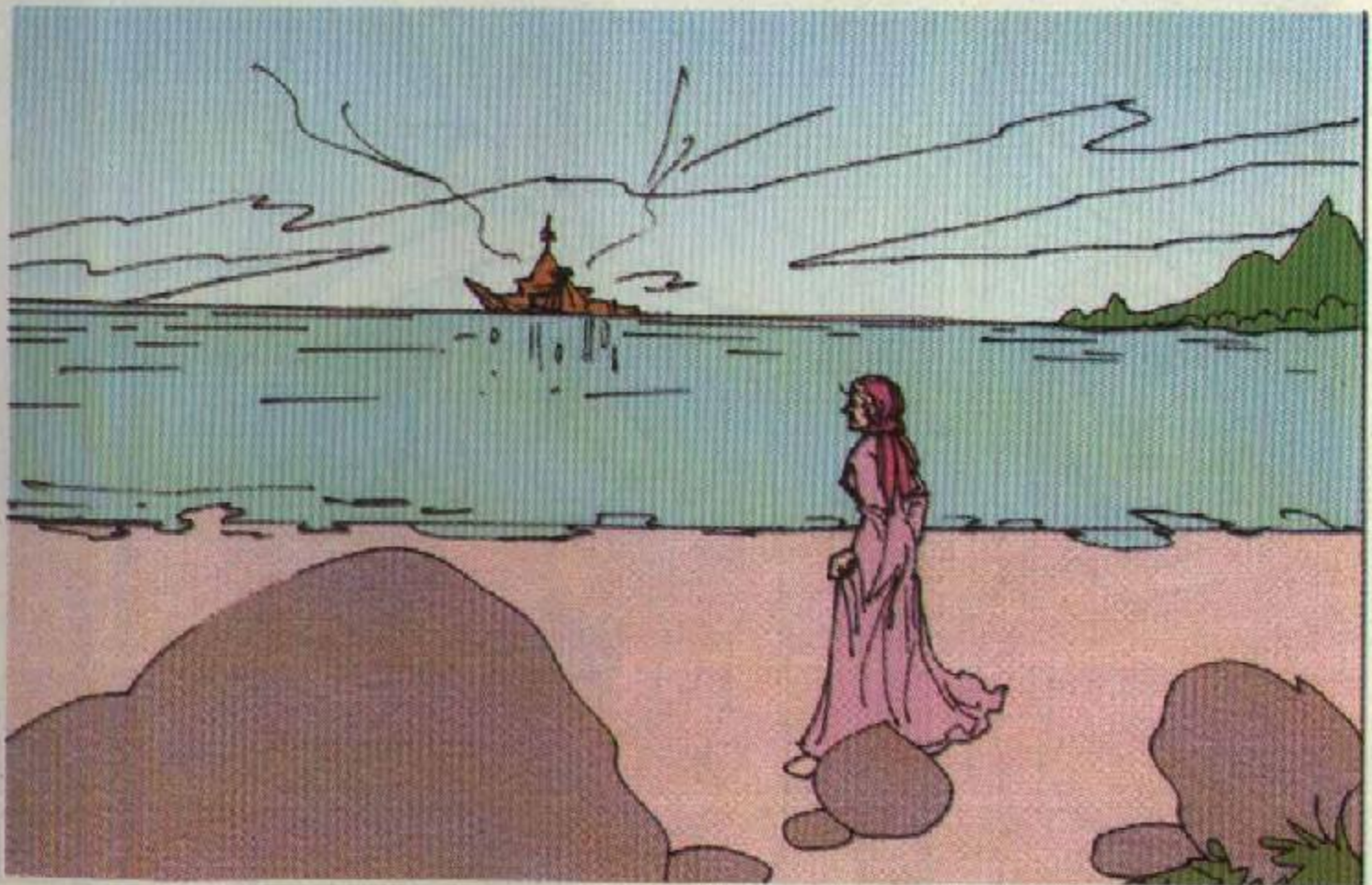
She wept bitter tears and questioned her fate. She strongly felt that nothing in her life seemed to be working according to her expectations. Whenever all was well with her,

something intervened and destroyed in a trice all her hopes and dreams.

'Why is it,' she cried out for a third time, 'that in the midst of my happiness, when I've adjusted well to my life and surroundings, that I'm cast down with grief? Why should such evil events come my way?'

She looked at the vast expanse of blue waters and the long stretch of sandy shore, but both remained silent to her queries. Picking herself up, she trotted inland consoling herself that there was still hope and one day life might provide her with the answer to her questions.

Now it so happened that Farah had stumbled into one of the island kingdoms, whose ruler wanted a tent. A tattered one had once come floating



and some sailors had told him how it was like a movable home. He had been fascinated. But no one in the realm knew how to make a tent.

As was the custom, heralds were being sent regularly to every nook and corner of the kingdom to bring any foreigner who might have landed on its shores, to the presence of the king. Maybe, someone who knew tent-making would be found some day!

"Good Lady, can you by any chance make and pitch a tent for us?" asked the ruler in a hopeful strain when Farah was brought to his presence.

Farah replied with a graceful bow: "Your Majesty, I think I can do so. Only I would need the necessary materials

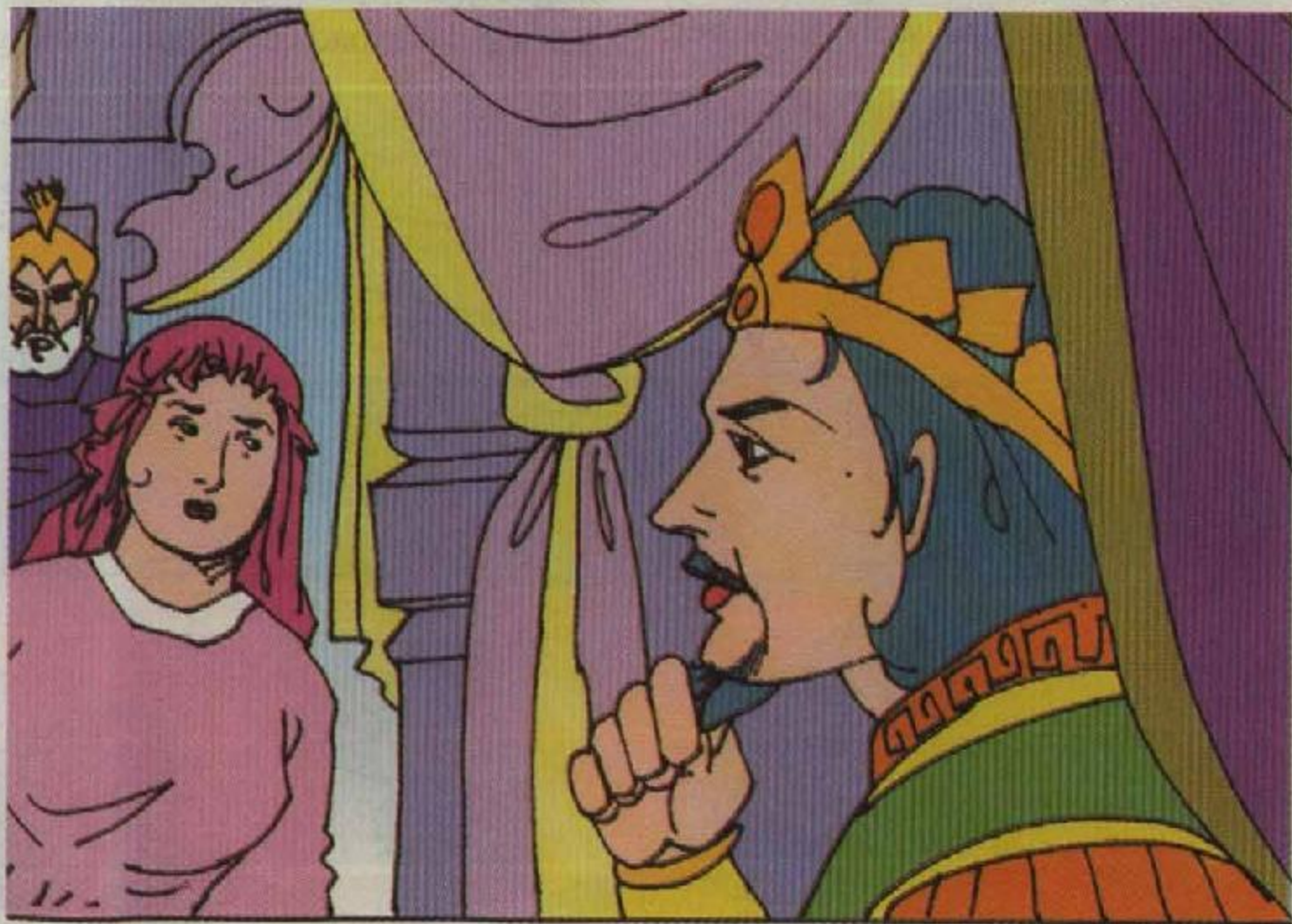
and some helping hands."

"I shall provide you with all that you want and put a thousand workers at your disposal! Just give me a tent!" exclaimed the king with great expectations.

"First, I want bundles of strong ropes!" she said.

Alas, there was none to be found in the kingdom. In fact, no one knew what a string of rope was like in that remote region of the world. Brilliant and talented that Farah was, she remembered her days with her father as she had often watched him at work as a spinner. She got sufficient flax collected and spun the necessary quantity of rope.

"Now I need some strong cloth," she





said. But the people of the realm had none of the kind she wanted for the tent. Now drawing upon her experience with the weavers, she made the required cloth.

"Now wherefrom will I get some sturdy tent-poles?" she pondered.

Alas, none was found to her liking and requirement. She remembered with gratitude how she had been trained by the old wood-fashioneer to make ship masts. So with help of the king's men, she sawed some logs to size and made the staffs.

Finally she recollected the different tents she had come across during her travels. With her skill and cleverness she adapted the best feature of each type and created a splendid tenthouse.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" exclaimed the king in great admiration. "You're indeed fit to be my daughter-in-law! The

prize I had thought for the girl who would fulfil my wish!"

So Farah married the prince amidst fanfare and jubilation. It was before long that she became the queen of the island and was loved by one and all.

Often, when she would recount her adventures to her jolly little children. Sitting around her in the garden, she would round up by saying, "My dear little ones, never take lightly the events and happenings that come your way!"

"Why, mother?" they would ask in a chorus.

"My angels, all that happens in your life, all your experiences, can indeed have a purpose and might one day come to your aid. As in my life, what was once unpleasant, ultimately played a role in making me what I am!"

—Retold by Anup Kishore Das

*Glimpses of a great civilisation –
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages.*

2. GRADUATING IN A RAINY NIGHT

“Grandpa, this naughty girl challenges me to prove that the Aryans did not invade India,” Sandip complained, gate-crashing into Devnath’s study, dragging Chameli, his sweet little sister, with him.

Devnath looked up at them and shut the book before him.

“Sandip, why don’t you demand of Chameli to prove that she did not come to our house from Honolulu or Madagaskar?” asked Grandpa.

“But I’ve always been here! I belong to this house!” Chameli asserted.

“That’s right. If I say that you don’t belong to this house, and one day you just butted into this house from Honolulu or Madagaskar, I have to prove that. The same is the case with Indians. They have always been here. There is nothing to suggest that they came from beyond the Himalayas. Their own old literature, which happens to be the oldest literature in the world, does not even speak of any distant home they left behind! No legend, no tradition, no historical factor suggests anything in that

direction. Rather, there are so many reasons to believe that the ancient Indians explored distant lands, leaving the stamp of their culture and faith on those civilizations,” said Grandpa Devnath.

“But, Grandpa, how and why did this theory, that the Aryans came into India from some faraway land, gain ground?” asked Chameli.

“The theory was floated by the British who ruled us. Probably they wanted to say that there was nothing unnatural in their coming from a distant land and dominating India, since a great part of the Indian population also had once come from some other land! The pity is, our own historians never questioned this theory,” lamented Grandpa.

Sandip was suddenly called by a group of his friends. They were preparing for the annual day of their school. They were to finalise the plan with their teacher.

“Grandpa!” cooed Chameli, who now had him all for herself. “Yesterday

f India

you told my brother the story of Nachiketa. He proudly narrated it to me. Please tell me a similar story of the olden days which I can narrate to him when he returns."

"Very well. I shall tell you such a story which will give you an idea about the students and teachers in ancient India. By the way, this is not a story, but an incident in the life of a boy who later became a renowned sage."

Devanath then went on:

There was a great teacher named Dhaumya who ran a school situated in a charming valley. Behind it stood some hills and in front of them spread a forest. Such schools were known as Gurukul— or the abode of their teacher.

Away from their homes and their locality, the students lived with their master, the Guru, in an environment abounding in natural splendour. The Gurukul was generally part of a bigger institution, known as

the Ashram or the hermitage. The Gruu was the head of both the Ashram and the school. The inmates of the Ashram, apart from the students, were those who practised Yoga.

"Grandpa," Chameli interrupted Devanath, "will you please tell me what is Yoga? But not now. I must hear the story before my brother returns!"

Devanath laughed. "All right. I'll tell you about yoga when your brother is with you. You wouldn't grudge him that knowledge, would you?"

"Oh no."

"Good. Now back to our story. The forest near Sage Dhaumya's Ashram had a lake at its centre. Close to the lake the Ashram had a plot of land. The



inmates of the Ashram and the students tilled the soil and raised crops.

One day it rained heavily. The rain continued the next day. When it did not stop even at night, the Guru looked worried. "I hope, the lake does not

explain philosophy very well. He was an adept at Yogic exercise, too. But the Guru was yet to tell him that he could go home.

The moment Aruni learnt about the Guru's concern, he set out to see things for himself. The rain had subsided. The moon shone through two big dark clouds. Aruni had no difficulty in finding his way to the lake and surveying the situation.

The embankment separating the lake from the plot of the Ashram land had been damaged at one place. Water had started flowing into the land and the volume as well as the force or the flow was on the increase. The breach on the embankment was growing wider.

Aruni scooped up palmfuls of earth and threw them on the breach in a bid to stop the flow. But he did not succeed in his effort.

The breach was enlarging; there was no time to lose. Aruni closed his eyes and meditated on the problem for a moment. Then he lay down himself along the breach, stopping the flow with his body.

Soon the moon disappeared and there was a fresh shower. The breeze was biting cold. Water splashed against Aruni's body, but could not cross it to flood the crop. Aruni stayed put and

overflow and submerge the crop!" he said.

Among his students was a bright boy named Aruni. He had already completed his studies. He was well-versed in scriptures and he could



by and by he became unconscious.

It was dawn when the Guru, anxious over Aruni's failure to return, went to the site accompanied by a few Ashramites. Some of them lifted Aruni and carried him to the Ashram while the others repaired the breach in the embankment.

Under the Guru's personal care Aruni soon regained consciousness. After he had sufficiently rested, the Guru called him. "My son, your education has been completed. Today you graduated with flying colours."

Aruni bowed in gratitude.

"What a fine character!" exclaimed Chameli, after listening to the story.

"Good you appreciated it. I hope it is clear to you that Aruni passed a test different from answering questions on scriptures. His action at once showed

how humble he was, in spite of being a scholar. He did not mind physical hardship if it was necessary to go through that. His determination to achieve his mission, which was to protect the crop, was exemplary. True education teaches one to be idealistic as well as practical; it enables one to rise above one's ego and one's pride; it inspires in one's heart the spirit of sacrifice, through spontaneous action Aruni proved that he had attained these qualities. Do you follow?"

"Yes, Grandpa. Thank you. I can now tell the story to my brother," Chameli beamed with joy.

"But was that the only reason for my telling you the story? Shouldn't you try to imbibe Aruni's qualities?"

"I shall, Grandpa! Many thanks."

-Visvvasu

(To continue)



WHEN FAILURE TURNED INTO SUCCESS

Success and failure are terms we often use. When we make an effort to satisfy a certain desire and the desire is fulfilled, we call it success. If it is not fulfilled, we call it failure.

Success is expected to make us happy. But is there any guarantee that success will make us happy? No. There is no such assurance, for happiness is mostly a matter of attitude.

Once a young man I knew appeared for an interview. Let us call him Sujan. There were many candidates and there was no time to put more than one question to each candidate.

Sujan was intelligent as well as studious. But when the board of examiners put him a question, he could not answer it.

However, he smiled happily when he stood up to leave the room, looking at the frowning faces of the three wise men before him.

"Strange! You appear to beam with joy despite your failure to answer our question!" observed the chairman of the board.

"I do not consider my inability to answer your question a failure, sir. In fact, it is a gain for me in terms of experience. I could have very well answered that, but for a chance-happening."

"Will you please explain?"

"Sir, yesterday I made a list of thirty questions which you could possibly ask



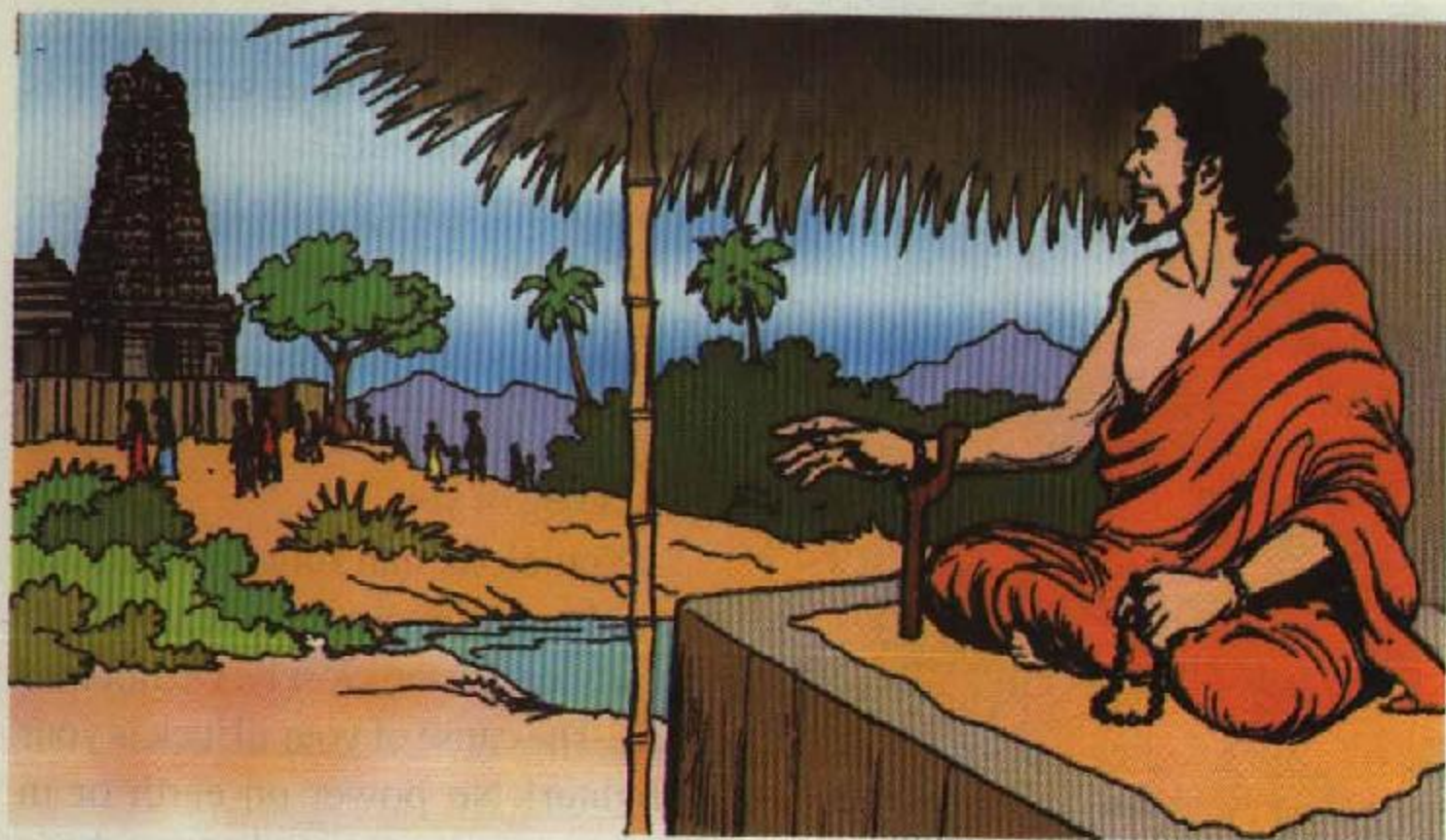
me. I prepared answers for twenty-nine of them. Suddenly my little sister and her two little friends barged into my room demanding of me that I helped them fly a kite! Their happiness was more important for me. In any case I took that 30th question to be rather insignificant and did not care to find out the answer for that. What can be a greater irony than the fact that the only question I had ignored should have been put to me!"

"What was the gain for you?" asked the examiner.

"My experience, sir, that a mere chance can completely upturn one's calculation. I am happy with this experience—a very precious gain."

The beauty of the situation was, the young man was selected. Said the chairman of the board: "He had an attitude which is far more valuable than one's ability to answer a question. To be able to learn from every situation and grow within is the sure sign of life and progress."

The young man was happy over his selection. But take it from me, he would have been the same even if he had not been selected.



A BRIDE **INSIDE** A CASKET

On the outskirts of a certain town stood an old temple. Not one day passed without hundreds of devotees visiting it. Offerings of fruits, sweetmeat, and coins were heaped before the deity.

A young man who thought himself very clever indeed, one day began to sport a tender beard, donned ochre clothes, and occupied a hut close by the temple. He sat with his eyes shut as if he were lost in meditation. But he took care to be seen by all the visitors. He hardly spoke.

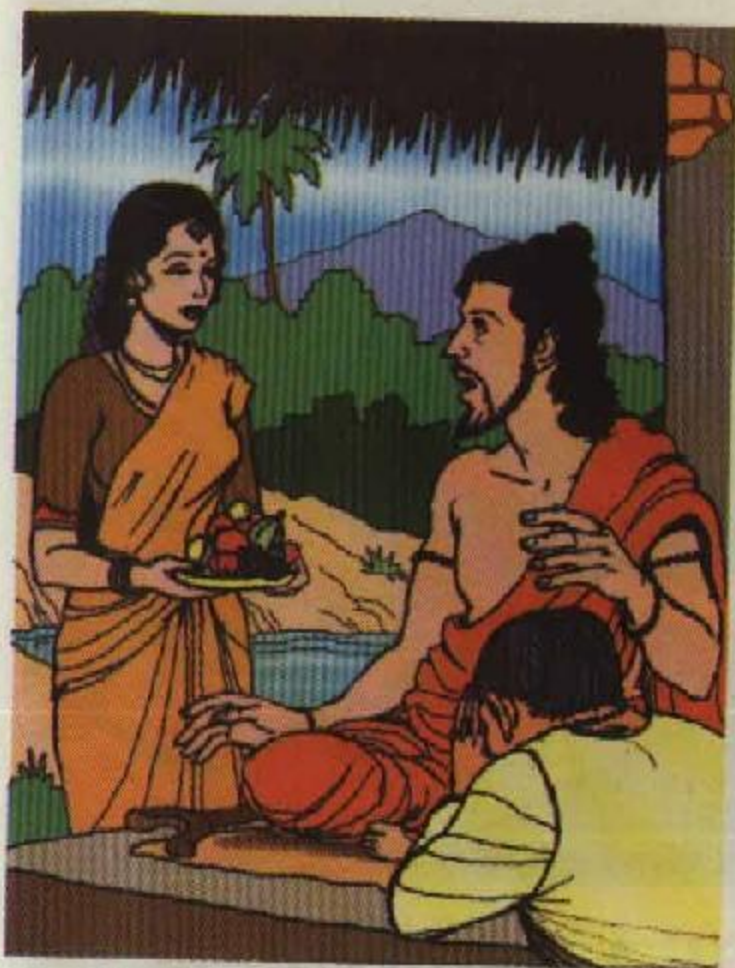
This must be a holy man, thought the townsfolk. By and by it became a custom with the visitors to the temple to look him up after they had worshipped the deity. They bowed to him and placed before him food and money as gifts. The fake hermit smiled

at them and patted them on the back. They were pleased, thinking that his blessings would surely do them good.

The young man soon prospered. With the money the visitors offered him he built a fine house near the temple and lived happily. He had at his command half a dozen good-for-nothing fellows who had become his disciples.

One day, a rich merchant paid a visit to the temple. He was accompanied by his wife and daughter. As they sat before the deity, their hands folded in devotion, the impostor watched them from his room on the upper floor of his new house. The merchant's daughter was extremely beautiful.

'How wonderful it would be to have her for my wife!' he thought, and sent for the merchant. And when the



merchant came, he received him with many kind words.

The merchant was surprised, for he knew that the holy man hardly spoke.

"You know that I don't care to talk to ordinary mortals. It is out of sheer compassion for you that I decided to break my sacred vow. I have, naturally, the power to see the shape of things to come. I'm sorry to say that before long a great misfortune is to befall you."

The merchant went ashen pale. "My ship is abroad. I have spent all that I have to heap it with valuable goods. My luck depends on the ship's safe return," he said, a moan escaping his lips.

"Precisely," said the hermit. "And for your information, your luck seems rather bad. Your ship is encountering a violent storm-right now! I am, to be sure, doing my best to save it from total

wreckage. But how long can I battle against your ill luck if its very cause is nurtured by yourself?"

The merchant fell at the hermit's feet and cried out: "I've no doubt that you're speaking a fat lot of sense, though I don't understand a grain of it. Please help me root out the cause of my ill luck, I beg of you."

"You alone can root that out, old man! I can of course guide you with my advice. Listen closely. Do not lose heart. The cause of your ill luck is your daughter! No power on earth or in heaven can save you as long as she is by your side. You must give her up immediately," said the hermit.

"But, am I not her father? How can I give her up?" asked the perplexed merchant.

"Easily," answered the hermit. "Shut her up in a casket and float the casket in the river! Being a father you can do it. I can't do it for you! Do it tonight by all means. Only, don't forget to place a lamp on the casket."

"No, sir! I cannot do away with my child in that manner. That would be worse than losing my ship," the merchant cried out, violently shaking his head.

The hermit laughed. He planted an affectionate slap on the merchant's cheek.

"You naïve fellow, don't I see your daughter's future too in the mirror on



my finger-nails? It is so written in her destiny that she will be rescued by a wonderful young man who will be pleased to marry her. You cannot dream of a better bridegroom than he in the whole town, nay, in the whole kingdom."

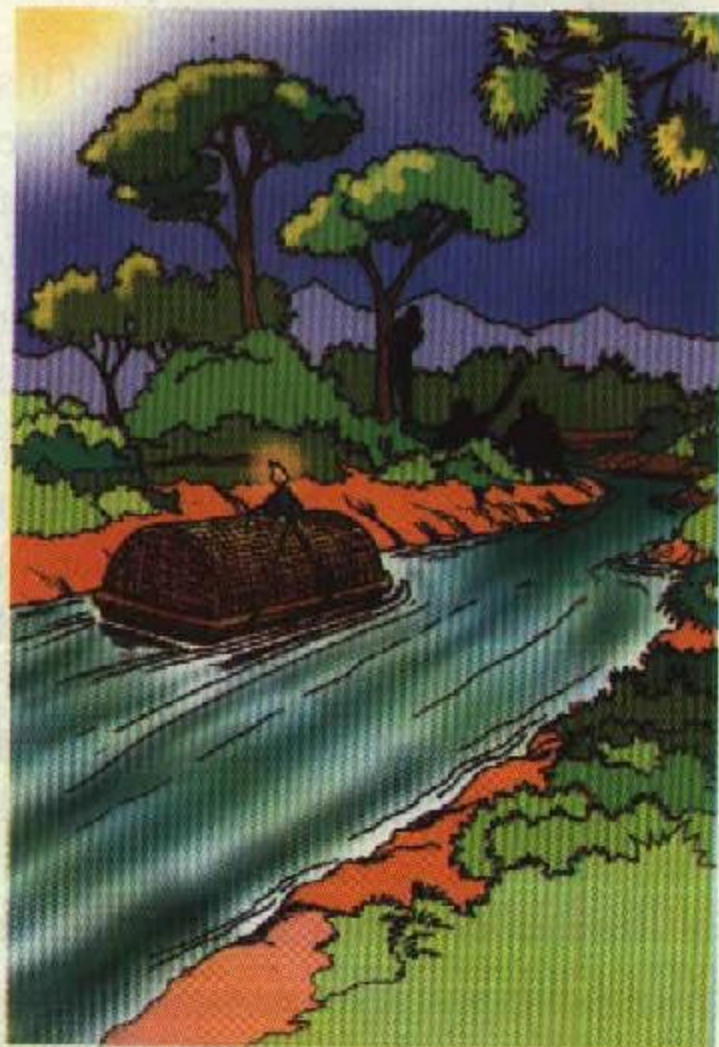
The merchant sighed with relief. After further reassurance from the hermit, he agreed to abide by his advice and took leave of him.

Although the merchant was left in no doubt about the bright future of his daughter, it proved very painful for him to put the innocent girl to sleep with some sedative. It was even more painful to put her in a casket and then float the casket down the river.

Faithful to the holy man's instruction, he placed a lamp on the casket.

That night the hermit, with some of his trusted disciples, waited impatiently on the desolate river-bank, his heart running pit-a-pat. Around midnight, they spotted a faint flicker in mid-stream. The mendicant was delighted. At his order, a couple of his disciples swam into the river and drew the floating casket ashore.

It was with great difficulty that the hermit suppressed his glee at the smooth success of his scheme. He could have straightaway proposed to marry the merchant's daughter. But he was not sure if the merchant would welcome the proposal and, even if he did,



if the girl would. Now, he felt sure that while the merchant would be thankful to him for being saved from certain misfortune, the girl would be grateful to him for being saved from certain death.

At his signal, his disciples carried the casket into his bedroom. He then dismissed them and, as excited as a mouse at the sight of cheese, took the lid off the casket in great haste.

Alas, strange are the ways of the world! No sooner had he done so than he received a sharp slap in the face. Horrified, he tried to take a closer look at what had emerged from the casket, but received an instant scratch in the eye.

As he covered his eyes with his palms, a savage bite took away a chunk



of his bright nose.

He shrieked and rushed out of his room, but not before the strange creature that hopped out of the casket had pulled his ear and planted a heavy spank on his cheek. Then it jumped out of the window, leapt onto a tree, and escaped.

The holy man ran for his life, at a total loss to understand how a beautiful girl could have changed into a dreadful monster.

"A witch, a witch!" he shrieked while running, but all that came out of his throat was a confused gurgle.

He never returned. He was wise not to, for, his disciples would not have known him after what the monkey had done to his face!

But as for the merchant's daughter, she did get the best bridegroom in the kingdom after all! It so happened that before the false hermit saw the casket,

it had been discovered by the prince of the land, who was returning by boat from a hunting spree in the forest. Attracted by the lamp, he brought the casket aboard his boat and opened it, only to discover the sleeping beauty. As he had earlier captured a ferocious monkey from the forest, he substituted this beast for the beauty and set the casket adrift again. He did not forget to put the lamp back in its place.

In the morning, the prince led the girl to her father. The merchant was not surprised—he had expected some such thing—though he was extremely delighted. He told the prince that he ought to marry her, for that was in her destiny!

The prince blushed, but could not think of anything to say. Never could he have searched for a more beautiful bride!



STORY OF THE MAHABHARATA

[The story so far: Much to his dismay, Duryodhana finds a quick depletion of Kaurava forces at the hands of the Pandava princes and their allies. He rushes to Bhishma, and asks him point-blank: "Why are we unable to defeat the Pandavas?" The patriarch replies that as long as Lord Krishna is on the side of the Pandavas, nobody can crush them. Duryodhana is not happy over such an answer. On the fifth day of the war, he faces certain defeat at the hands of Bhima. Fortunately for him the battle is called off for the day. The next day, the two meet once again. Bhima destroys Duryodhana's chariot. Kripa drags him to the safety of his chariot. On the seventh day, a general panic seizes the Kauravas. Once again Duryodhana goes to Bhishma, who asks the Kaurava prince to quell Bhima's rampage with his own powers.]

As the battle reached its zenith on the eighth day, Arjuna's son Irawatha darted into the Kaurava ranks. Irawata's mother was the daughter of Nagaraja. After Garuda killed her husband, Arjuna married her, and to them was born Irawatha. When he was exiled from the land of serpents, he joined his father on earth. Irawatha was surrounded by all the five brothers of Shakuni. Barring Vrishaba, the other four were killed by Irawatha.

Duryodhana sent Arsuvasringa who managed to kill the youth. Irawatha's head was stuck on a spear and

displayed by the Kauravas, who took this as a sign of victory and surged forward.

The battle raged for long. When Irawatha fell, Ghatotkacha caught hold of a trident and fell on the Kauravas. The enemy forces faced a big rout, when Duryodhana came out to meet the challenge. The King of Vanga went to his help with his massive elephant corps.

Ghatotkacha ordered his legions to attack the elephants. Duryodhana noticed the havoc in his ranks, and showered his arrows on Bhima's son.





Undaunted, Ghatothkacha hurled a thunderbolt at Duryodhana. The King of Vanga pushed an elephant to the front and it was instantly killed by the powerful weapon. Ghatothkacha went on with greater vigour and slew a countless number of soldiers.

Yudhishtira, admiring his valour, remarked: "Bhima, your son is waging a lone battle. Go to his aid." At once Bhima swung his mace and charged at the Kaurava ranks.

Duryodhana's rage rose uncontrollably at the reverses suffered by his armies. He hurled his weapons at Bhima one after another and he had the satisfaction of seeing the Pandava colossus wilt under his barrage of arrows. Noticing Bhima's plight, Ghatothkacha and Abhimanyu

surrounded Duryodhana, and there began a fierce fight which soon had the Kaurava prince gasping for breath. When Drona rushed to the help of Duryodhana, Ghatothkacha began to demonstrate his wizardry, and fought a running battle with his enemies.

Duryodhana once again went up to Bhishma. "Grandfather, we rely upon you as much as the Pandavas depend on Lord Krishna. Now this Ghatothkacha is creating havoc among our forces. You must destroy him!"

"Very well, we'll send Bagadatta," said Bhishma, "Bagadatta, you've experience in fighting the titans. Go and kill Ghatothkacha."

Bagadatta obediently climbed his elephant and charged at Bhima's chariot. At once, the Kekayas, Upapandavas, and Abhimanyu, and Kings Dasarna, Kshattradeva, and Chitraketu, showered their arrows on the mighty tusker. But the great animal brushed aside the stinging arrows and gored many of the Pandava warriors to death. Ghatothkacha, fighting in another part of the field, wheeled round to attack the mammoth animal.

When it was twilight, the combatants retired to their camps. Nursing his wounds, Duryodhana gave vent to his frustration. "See that! Bhishma, Drona, and Salya have not been able to kill the Pandavas. Day by day our forces are getting smaller and smaller. How can I avenge this great insult?"

Karna boasted: "Let Bhishma quit



the battlefield and I'll destroy the Pandavas in a trice. Only then will Bhishma realise the greatness of my prowess. Bhishma actually loves the Pandavas, that's why he has spared their lives. Relieve him of his command. Then you'll see what I can do to the Pandavas."

Duryodhana was heartened by these words. He went to Bhishma and said: "Grandfather, perhaps you're angry with me, and that's why you don't wish to kill the Pandavas. If that is so, you should allow someone else like Karna to take over command and lead our forces."

Bhishma found it difficult to control his anger. In a grim voice he said: "Duryodhana, you talk like a fool. When haven't I done my best on the battlefield? You forget that our enemies are extremely powerful. Arjuna is peerless in fighting. Where was Karna when you were captured by the king of the Gandharvas? Didn't he show a clean pair of heels then? Wasn't it Arjuna, who single-handedly faced them? You started this war, and I would only be glad if you can destroy Sikhandi, I'm willing to kill all others. And if I fail in my task, I shall die on the battlefield. Watch what I do tomorrow on the battlefield!"

Duryodhana was elated when he heard this. He went back and told his soldiers: "Bhishma is determined to wipe out our enemies. Make sure that he comes to no harm."



Sakuni, Salya, Kripa, Drona, and Vivimsathi promised to protect the old patriarch.

On the ninth day of the war, Bhishma arranged his forces the Sarvathobhadra formation.

As the battle commenced, Abhimanyu drove forward like lightning and launched a blistering attack on Saindhava, Kripa, Drona, and Aswathama. Duryodhana sent the titan Alambasa to meet him in combat.

After a prolonged fight, Alambasa was forced to retreat. Now Bhishma moved up to engage the Pandava youth in a keen duel. On both sides, the warriors fought on relentlessly and the field ran red with the blood of the wounded and the slain.





After the gory day came to an end, the Pandavas pondered over the ways to defeat Bhishma. Lord Krishna said: "If he tries hard, Arjuna can kill Bhishma. And if Bhishma falls, victory is yours."

Then Yudhishtira said: "Krishna, Bhishma is really interested in our welfare. So I shall go and even ask him how we can defeat him."

Krishna smiled. "True, Yudhishtira. Great warriors like Bhishma know how they can be killed."

Bhishma, the Grand Patriarch and architect of Duryodhana's victories, ultimately fell down mortally wounded. Arjuna accomplished this mighty task by attacking the aged warrior in the company of Sikhandi. On seeing the

latter, Bhishma remembered his vow and dropped his bow. At once, Arjuna's barbs pierced his armour. But, he did not die immediately. He asked Arjuna to make him a bed of arrows rising above the ground. When he asked for water, Arjuna shot an arrow into the ground, and there came out a spring of cool water to quench the dying warrior's thirst.

After the fall of Bhishma, Drona led the troops into battle. Abhimanyu rashly advanced into a trap set for him, and was killed instantly by the Kaurvas. On hearing the news of his son's death, Arjuna swore a terrible vengeance on Saindhava who had prevented the Pandavas from going to the aid of the young Pandava prince. Next day, Saindhava fell to Arjuna's arrows.

When Drona heard from Yudhishtira that a mighty elephant called Aswathama was dead, he thought it was his own son. He stood on the battlefield totally unnerved and defenceless. Seizing this opportunity, Dhristadyumna killed him.

Now Karna assumed command of the Kaurva forces. Though he displayed great valour and was true to his boast, he could not win over Arjuna. When his chariot got submerged in the mud, he jumped down to pull the wheels out. At the same time, a well-flighted arrow from Arjuna pierced his heart, and he died.



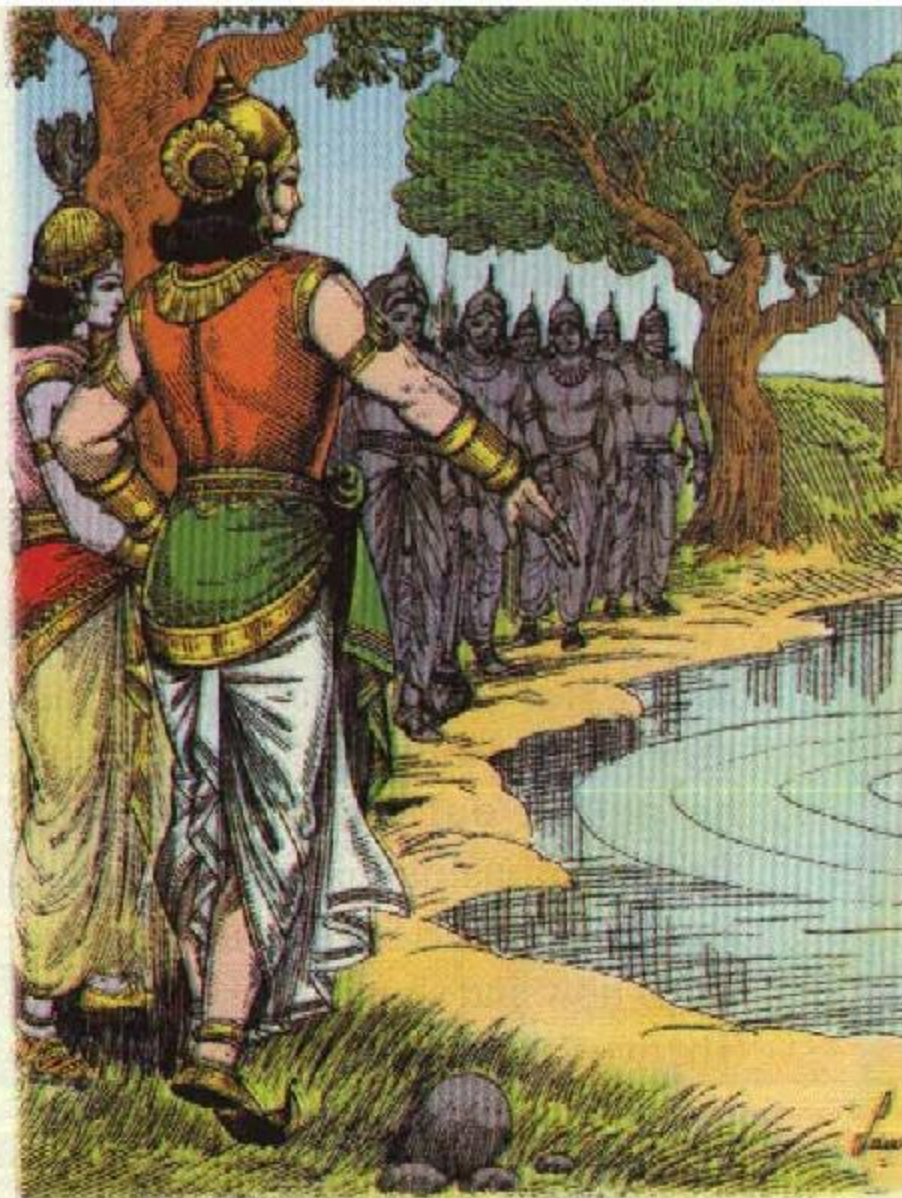
On the eighteenth day, the great war came to an end. By then countless lives had been lost. As many as eighteen Akshaunis of fighting forces were completely destroyed. All the hundred Kauravas were dead, barring Duryodhana. Bhima chased Dushasana, and killed him in a terrible duel. He dipped his fingers into his entrails and drank his blood to fulfil his promise to Draupadi.

When the war had ended, Aswathama and Kripa went in search of Duryodhana. Sanjaya found him on the banks of a pool. But he was asked to return to Hastinapura and report to his father Dhritarashtra that he was still alive. On his way, Sanjaya met Aswathama and Kripa, and directed them to where he had seen Duryodhana.

Meanwhile, the Pandavas were also searching for Duryodhana, and at last came to the pool where he was hiding. Yudhishtira said: "Duryodhana, like a coward you are hiding here, after your entire race has been destroyed. Come out and fight. Unless you defeat us, you won't be able to rule in peace."

Duryodhana replied in a frustrated voice: "I don't wish to rule. I want no territory. Take everything. It is all yours!"

Yudhishtira said: "Do you think we'll accept charity from you? Unless you defeat us, you cannot rest in peace.



Come, fight against Bhima like a courageous warrior. Fight and perish, or live like a craven coward."

Bhima also taunted him on his poor showing as a warrior. Stung by these words, Duryodhana came out of the pool and fought with Bhima. The two adversaries pounded each other with maces. At last, Bhima tore Duryodhana's thigh into two with a powerful stroke of his mace.

Aswathama and Kripa found Duryodhana in this condition and swore to take revenge on the Pandavas. At night, when all was quiet, they crept into the Pandava tent and slew all the sleeping figures there. Dhristadyumna was thus foully murdered, the Upapandavas were slain, and the tents

were reduced to ashes by the time the assassins ceased their foul deed.

The Pandavas were shocked at this calamity, and it did not take them long to discover who the perpetrators of the crime were. Bhima and Arjuna climbed their chariots and raced away in hot pursuit of the assailants. Bhima found Aswathama among the disciples of Sage Vyasa. He was horrified to find the Pandavas alive and well. Quickly, he pulled out an arrow named Brahmasironama and aimed it at the Pandavas. Arjuna fitted a similar arrow to his bow and shot it at Aswathama. The two flaming arrows collided in mid-air and threatened to destroy everything around them. Sages Vyasa and Narada requested the two adversaries to recall their arrows. Arjuna promptly complied with the request, but Aswathama could not recall his weapon. Whereupon, Lord Krishna forced Aswathama to concede defeat. The son of Drona then went away to do penance in the forest.

In Hastinapura, Dhritarashtra

grieved over his dead sons. Sanjaya told him: "The cream of your race lies in the dust. All those who supported the Kauravas are also dead. We must perform their last rites."

Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti went to the battlefield. The grieving king was told Duryodhana had been killed by Bhima. His heart burst with anger and hatred. However, pretending affection, he expressed his desire to embrace Bhima. Lord Krishna, who read the king's mind, cautioned Bhima and asked him to move away and then led Dhritarashtra to a metal figure of Bhima which had been placed there earlier.

The king wrapped his arms round the statue and pressed with all his might. The statue broke into several pieces.

Lord Krishna said: "O King, You've destroyed only a statue of Bhima. He lives and all your strength is now gone."

Dhritarashtra was ashamed of his conduct. Driving away all rancour from his mind, he now blessed the Pandavas.

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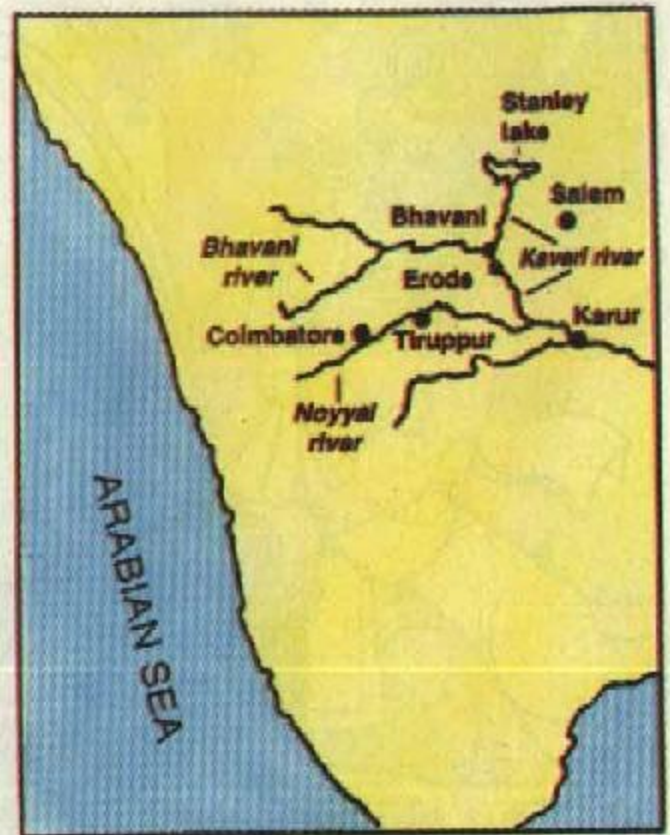
Temples and Legends

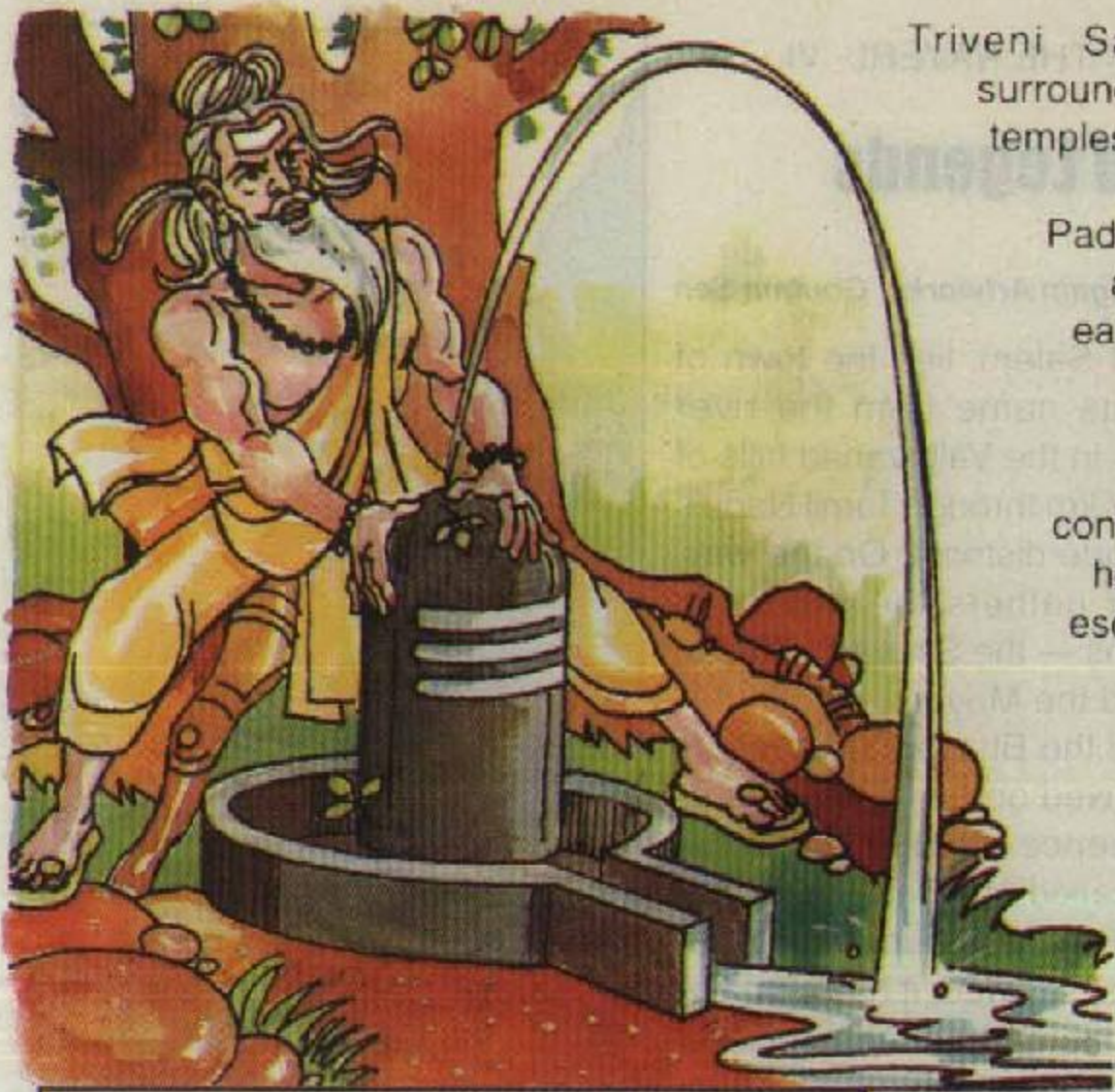
Text: Jayanthi Mahalingam Artworks: Goutam Sen

To the southwest of Salem, lies the town of Bhavani. It takes its name from the river Bhavani which rises in the Valluvanad hills of Kerala and flows 217 km through Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore and Erode districts. On the way, this perennial river gathers the waters of various small streams — the Siruvani, Chittar, Kunnoor, Kunda and the Moyar.

The spot where the Bhavani river meets the Kaveri is a hallowed one, and as is usual at any such confluence, a third, invisible, subterranean river called Amuda is believed to join the other two here. According to a legend, the sage Parasara buried a jar of nectar at Bhavani to keep it safe from the *asuras*. When he returned, it had changed into a *shivalingam*! Parasara tried to lift it but he couldn't. Instead a stream gushed forth from the *lingam* and became the river Amuda at the confluence!

The Bhavani Sangameshwarar temple is one of the renowned Saivite shrines in Tamil Nadu. This shrine is also known as Dakshinaprayag, Dakshinabadri and





The sage Parasara tried to lift the *shivalingam*

Triveni Sangamam. It is surrounded by the five hill temples of Sankagiri,

Tiruchengode, Padmagiri, Mangalagiri and Vedagiri. In the early 1900's, a British Collector, Edmund Garrow, lived in a bungalow near the confluence. One night, he had a miraculous escape from the flash floods which inundated the bungalow as well as an old fort nearby. Just minutes before the flood, he had vacated the house. It is said that the goddess

Vedanayaki appeared to him in a dream to warn him. A grateful Garrow gifted an ivory palanquin and jewels to the temple. Openings were made in the wall of the temple to allow him to have *darshan* of the deity.

The city of Erode lies to the south of Bhavani. The name 'Erode' may refer to the two main water channels dug from the Kaveri, the Perumpalayam and Kalingarayan, known as *odai* in Tamil. According to legend, the place got its name from the words *Eera Odu* which in Tamil means "wet skulls". The Devi Bhagavatha narrates the story of the sacrifice performed by Daksha Prajapathi, to which his own son-in-law, Shiva had not been invited. But Dakshyayini or Parvati, his daughter, turned up uninvited. She was slighted by her parents. She was so hurt that she threw herself in the *yagnakundam*. On hearing this, Shiva was enraged. He created two monsters, Virabhadra and Bhadrakali, from his matted locks. They proceeded to the sacrificial spot, killed Daksha and his followers and threw them into the fire. The skulls and bones were flung into the Kaveri where they remained, forever wet.

Southwest of Erode, in the Western Ghats, rises the Noyyal, a seasonal river that flows through the cities of Coimbatore and Tiruppur, before merging with the Kaveri at Karur.

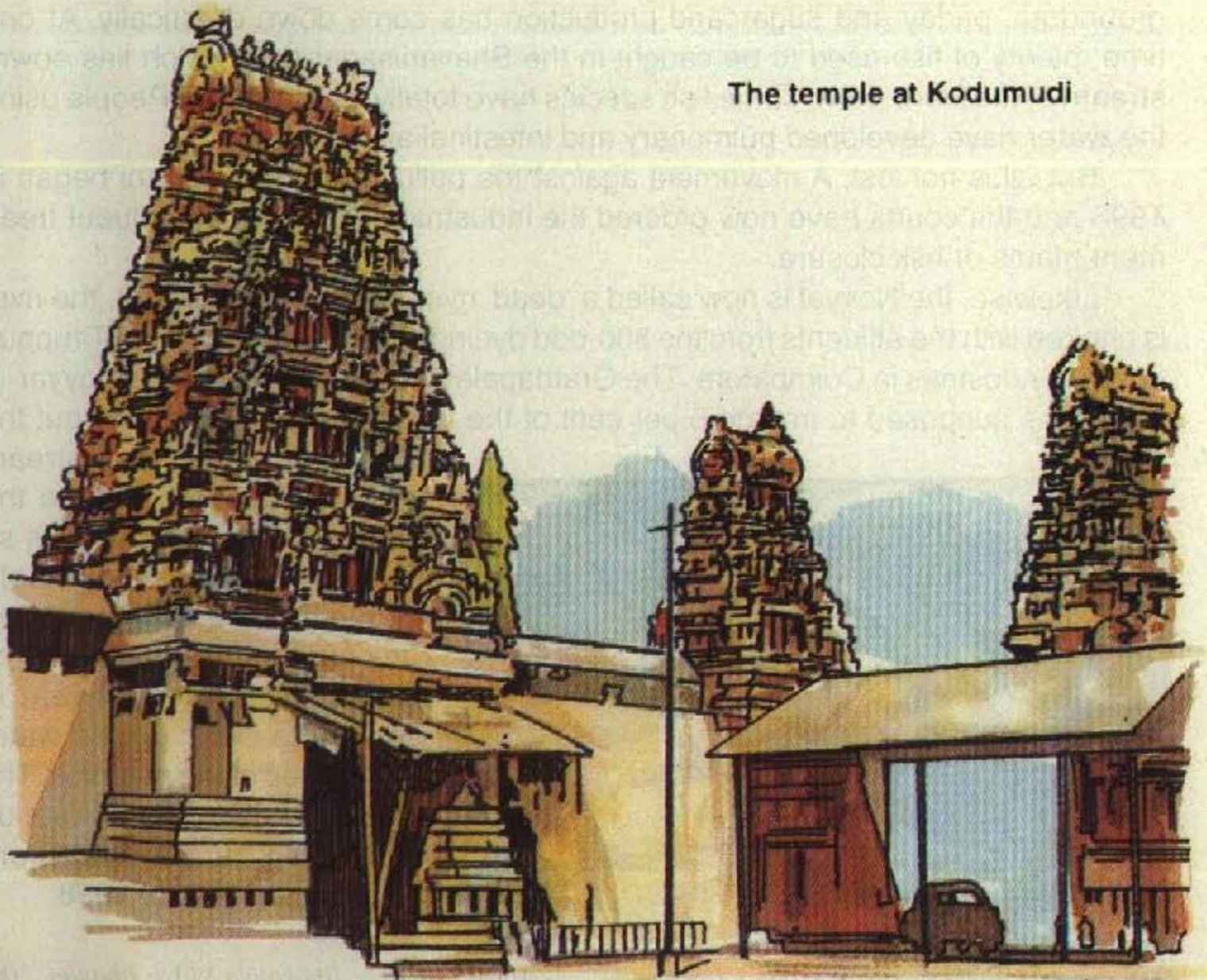
Coimbatore is the second-largest city in Tamil Nadu. There are more than 30,000 industries and textile mills here, making its South India's 'Manchester'. Coimbatore is also known as 'Kovai'. The Perur Patteeswarasamy temple, situated 7 km from

Coimbatore, near the river Noyyal, is dedicated to Shiva. The Kanakasabha has some exquisite sculptures. The temple is believed to have been built in the 1st century A.D. The innermost shrine was built by the great Chola king Karikalan.

At Karur, a third tributary called the Amaravathi joins the Kaveri. This river originates in the Anaimalai hills in Coimbatore district and is more than 200 km long. A number of dams provide enough water for irrigation. The Uyyakondan channel flowing out of the confluence supplies water to Tiruchi as well.

In ancient times, the Kaveri and Amaravathi rivers formed a natural boundary between the Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms. All three kings paid their respects to the deity of the Chellandiamman temple located at the confluence before important parleys. There is an Agastya temple at the spot to which even the boatmen who ferried people across the river, contributed part of their earnings. The *samadhi* of the great saint-poet Sadasiva Brahmendra, a disciple of Acharya Paramasivendra Sarasvati of Kanchi, is at Neroor close by. There is an incident narrated about him. Once when he was meditating near Kodumudi on the Kaveri's banks, a sudden flood swept away the bank, leaving him buried in sand. When he was dug up, he silently shook off the sand and walked away, quite unperturbed! Just as the Kaveri at Thiruvaiyaru is believed to resound with Thyagaraja's songs, the Kaveri at Neroor is said to echo to Sadasiva's compositions.

The temple at Kodumudi



A River Under Siege

The area that lies between Mettur and Tiruchirapalli is probably the most industrialised in Tamil Nadu. Industries are concentrated in the vicinity of the Mettur and Bhavani dams and in the towns along the banks of the Kaveri



The polluted Noyyal basin near Tiruppur

and its tributaries, the Bhavani, Noyyal and Amaravathi. The people have benefited since there are plenty of jobs available. The same cannot be said of the rivers which have turned into virtual sewers. Huge quantities of industrial effluents and untreated sewage flow into the Kaveri and its tributaries every day from the towns of Mettur, Bhavani, Erode, Coimbatore and Tiruppur among others, severely affecting crops and the health of the riverside population.

The effluents discharged by industries along the Bhavani are so toxic that the groundnut, paddy and sugarcane production has come down drastically. At one time, plenty of fish used to be caught in the Bhavanisagar dam which lies downstream of the plant. Now, some fish species have totally disappeared. People using the water have developed pulmonary and intestinal ailments.

But all is not lost. A movement against the pollution of the Bhavani began in 1993 and the courts have now ordered the industrial units to set up effluent treatment plants or risk closure.

Likewise, the Noyyal is now called a 'dead' river. Merely 173 km long, the river is choked with the effluents from the 800-odd dyeing and bleaching units of Tiruppur, and the industries in Coimbatore. The Orathapalayam dam built over the Noyyal in 1992 was supposed to irrigate 5 per cent of the land in the Noyyal basin, but the

farmers in Karur downstream from Tiruppur, cannot use the water because its quality is so poor. In a truly remarkable judgement, the courts ordered Tiruppur's industry, which earns Rs. 2000 crore every year in exports, to clean up the water and the bed of the reservoir. The units were also asked to set up common effluent treatment plants by the end of 1998.



Effluents flow into the Kaveri near Erode

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INDIA Then and Now

THE METROPOLIS OF SOUTH INDIA



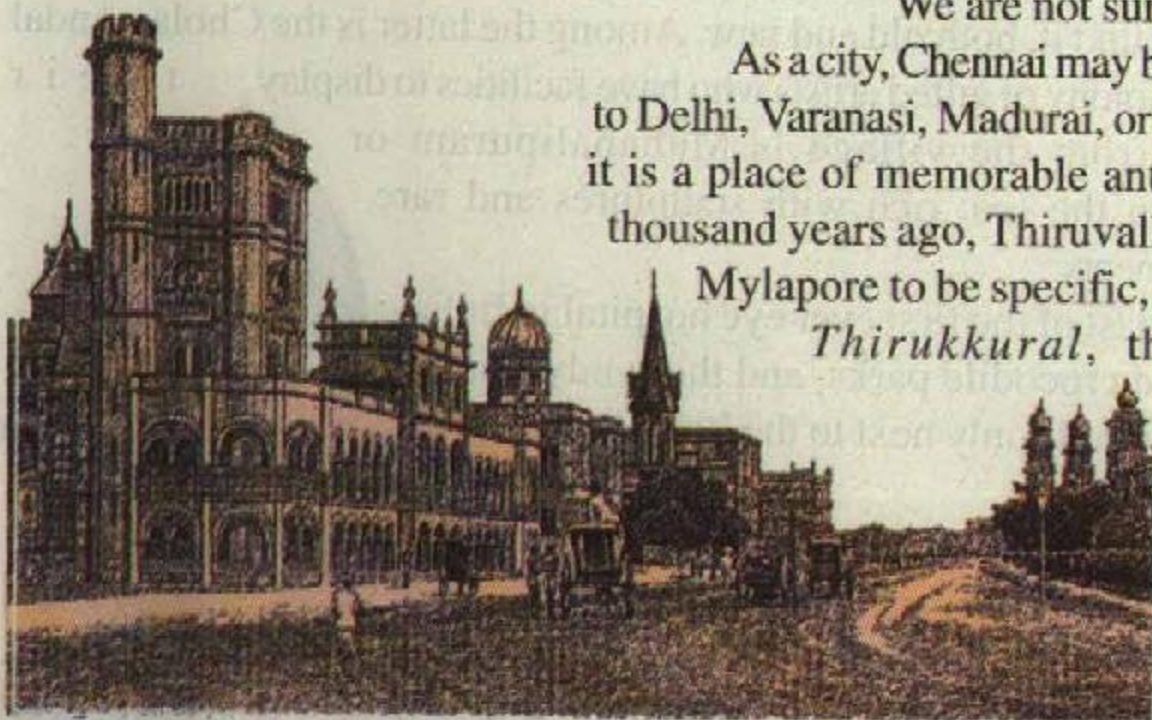
The name Chennai, for the capital of Tamil Nadu, may have come into circulation only recently, but it is an old name that was long forgotten. The city was called Madras and still earlier as Madraspatam.

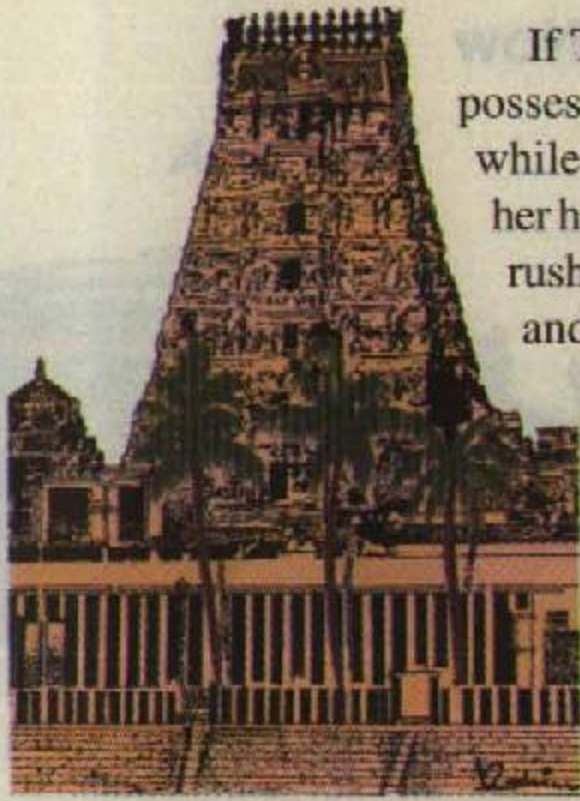
But how did the names 'Chennai' and 'Madras' come into vogue?

'Chennai' is probably derived from Channa Kesavan, the deity of an old temple on the sea, which the East India Company demolished in order to build a fort on the site. The other theory is, Francis Day, who founded the English settlement here, bought the land from Naik Damarla Venkatappa, the chief minister of the King of Vijayanagaram. Venkatappa made it a condition that the place be named after his father, Chennappa Naik. Hence Chennai.

What about the name 'Madras'? Was it from a *madrasa*, a Muslim school? Or was it after the name of a leader of the Muslim community, Madarasan? Was it after the name of an influential Portuguese family, called Madera? We are not sure.

As a city, Chennai may be young, compared to Delhi, Varanasi, Madurai, or Kanchipuram. But it is a place of memorable antiquity. About two thousand years ago, Thiruvalluvar lived here, at Mylapore to be specific, and composed the *Thirukkural*, the great work of wisdom and insight in Tamil, which is sometimes referred to as the 'Fifth Veda' of India.





If Thiruvalluvar was a sage-poet, his wife, Vasuki, possessed mysterious powers. According to one story, while Vasuki was one day drawing water from a well, her husband called out to her. She left the rope and came rushing to Thiruvalluvar. A visitor went near the well and saw to his amazement that the bucket remained hung midway in the air without any support.

St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, who came to India in 52 A.D., ultimately reached Chennai and died on a hill on the city's outskirts. The hill is known as Mount St. Thomas. The other monument to bear his memory is the San Thome Cathedral, where he was buried.

In the 17th century, Chennai became a centre of trade for the English East India Company. The early Englishmen lived in straw huts along the beach. Soon came up the monument, later to become famous as the Fort St. George.

The city is marked by ancient shrines like the Kapaleshwarar temple at Mylapore and the Parthasarathy temple at Triplicane.

Adyar, a part of Chennai, is the headquarters of the International Theosophical Society. It is an ideal place for study and meditation.

Kalakshetra, which literally means 'temple of arts', was founded by the late Rukmini Arundale, wife of Dr. G.S. Arundale, one-time President of the Theosophical Society. It was located in the Society complex for some time. It is now housed in its own building, not far away from the Society.

Modern Chennai on the sea, with a population of nearly 40 lakhs, has several important sites around it, both old and new. Among the latter is the Cholamandal Artists' Village, a colony of gifted artists who have facilities to display their works. Not far from the village is Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram on the sea, rich with sculptures and rare monolithic monuments.

The city can boast of the first ever eye hospital in India, the first snake and crocodile parks, and the sandy Marina which in size (12 km) is only next to the Long Beach in California, U.S.A.

Chennai has several universities, well-maintained parks, a large museum, a national library, as well as zoos. It has also a prolific film industry. It is the largest city in southern India.



SECRETS OF THE PYRAMID

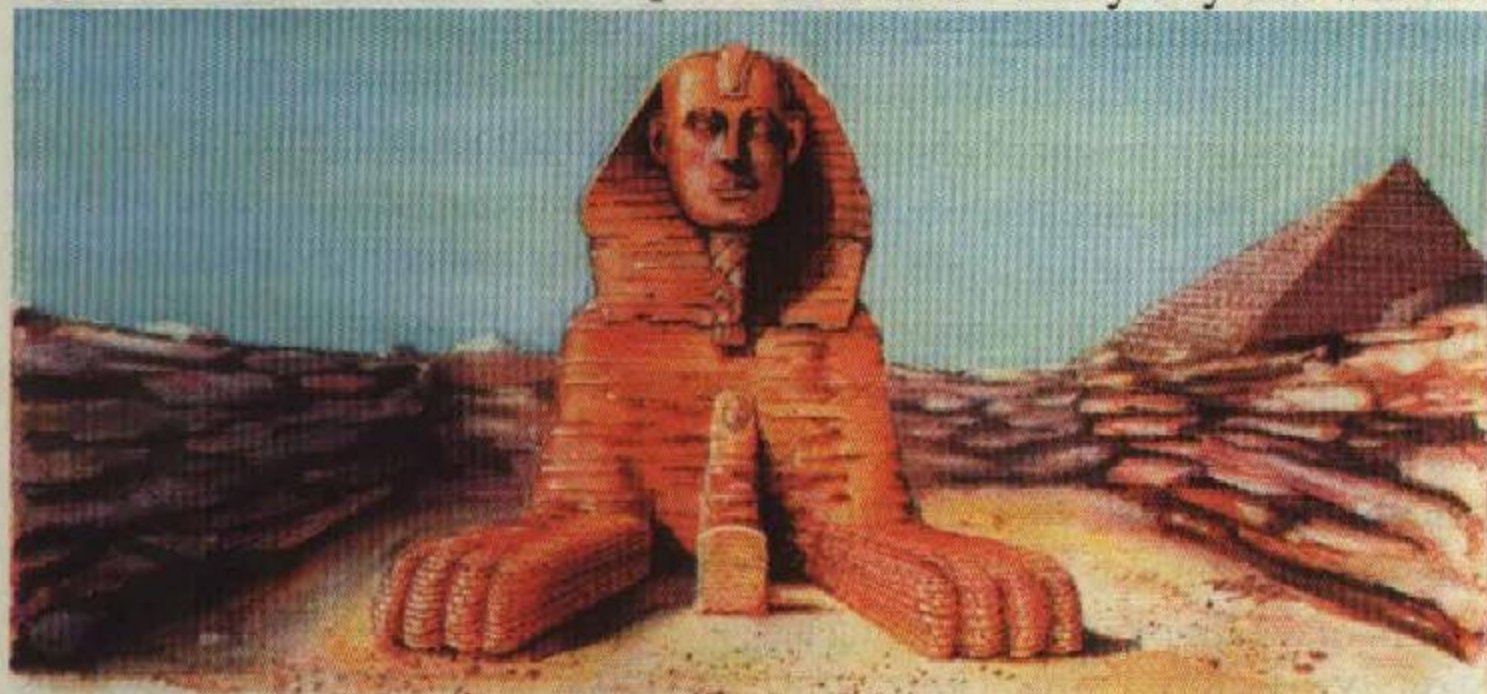
In the vast desert, in a remote past, a winged creature with a lion's body and a human head, with the paws of a dog and a serpent for its tail, guarded the road to Thebes and terrorised all travellers by demanding the answer to a riddle: "What is it that has one voice and yet becomes four-footed in the morning, two at midday and three in the evening?" Alas, whosoever failed to give the right answer to this baffling question, the Sphinx, as the creature was known, straightway devoured him.

Eventually, Prince Oedipus, when thus challenged, forthwith answered, "Man! Man, who in his infancy crawls on all fours, who walks upright when grown and mature, and in old age supports himself on a staff." Thereupon

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

the Sphinx at once killed itself.

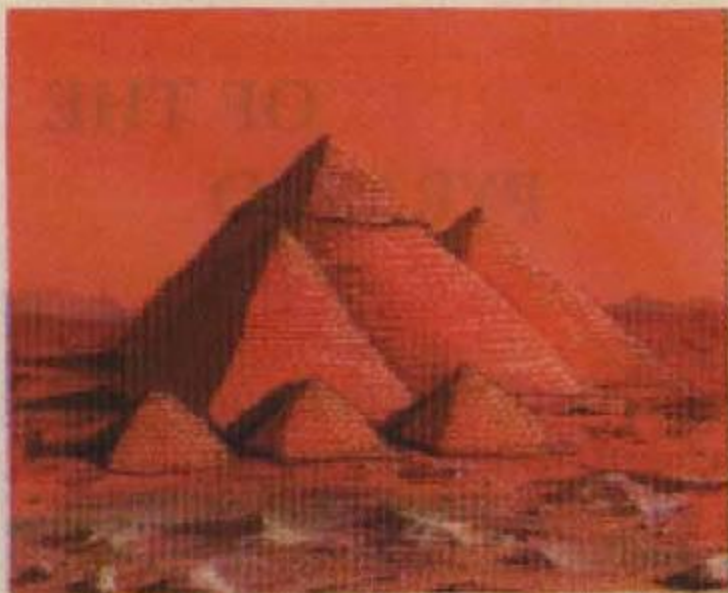
Not far from the capital city of Cairo in Egypt and beside the world's longest river Nile, nestles Giza. In this desert land crouches a colossal Sphinx of stone as if on guard. Behind it, at some distance from each other, three massive structures prominently rise into the blue sky. They are the enigmatic Pyramids that have since time immemorial cast a spell on man. Though simple in form, both the Sphinx and the Pyramids, by their sheer magnitude and architectural perfection, overwhelm the onlooker with an air of mystery and wonder.



How were they built? Who built them and why?

The pyramids were supposedly built around the 26th century B.C. by the 4th dynasty Pharaohs of Egypt. The first one known as the Great Pyramid is ascribed to Cheops the second, its equally large companion to Chephren and lastly the small Pyramids are credited to Myserinus. Another theory prevalent is that Cheops actually did not build the Pyramid, for to raise a monument of such magnitude would not have been possible during his lifetime. What could have happened is, occasionally both the Sphinx and the Pyramids were buried out of sight by the drifting desert sand. According to Egyptian records, the Pharaoh Cheops was known to dig out the buried temples and other structures in and around Giza. The Great Pyramid is one of them as his name was found engraved on its passage wall.

As one of the still standing monuments of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the Great Pyramid of Giza rises to a height of about 450 feet, as tall as a forty-five storey building, and slopes down at an angle of 52 degrees. Its perfectly square base covers an area of 53 square kilometres. It is estimated that around 2,500,000 sandstone blocks weighing 6 million tons—which comes to about twice the weight of the Empire State Building in New York—have gone into the



construction of this stupendous structure. Originally, the Pyramid was faced with a white smooth stone that glistened in the brilliant desert sun, though now it has been long since stolen. Indeed, the monument is a masterpiece of technical excellence and engineering ability. The internal walls and the casing stones still show such finer joints that to this day it is difficult to fit in a knife-blade between them.

Though the Pyramid consists of the King's and the Queen's Chambers, the Grand Gallery, the subterranean chamber, empty sarcophagus, corridors and passages, it surely did not serve as a mere burial chamber. Then what for so much labour and material were put in for years together to raise such an astounding edifice? About 40 important Pyramids are dotted at various sites along the River Nile and more too have been discovered in other areas. Certainly, there must have been some deeper reasons for their construction!

In 1903 Aleister Crowley, an occultist, while spending a night in the

King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid, began to read in candlelight. Suddenly, to his amazement, the entire room was filled with an extraordinary light and he now longer required the candle. No explanation has yet been found for this strange phenomenon.

A Frenchman, Antoine Bovis, while travelling through Egypt, visited the Great Pyramid and found strewn all over the Royal Chamber bodies of cats, rats and mice that had wondered in and died there. Surprisingly, no odour came from the dead animals and they seemed to be in a mummified condition. Back home, he reproduced to scale a cardboard model of the Cheops's Pyramid and it wonderfully worked! Meat, eggs, dead animals placed in it were all mummified!

Karl Drbal, a Czechoslovakian radio engineer, placed an ordinary razor blade in a cardboard model of the Great Pyramid. Lo and behold! the blade regained its sharpness. Thus he claims to have enjoyed more than a hundred shaves with the same blade. Later, he patented his razor-sharpening device.

Do some unusual power and energy emanate from the Pyramids? Various experiments have proved that food items remain unspoilt when placed inside pyramids. Plants improve growth, small animals even increase their life-span, and a cup of coffee, when kept for about 20 minutes inside the structure,

loses its bitterness and becomes mellow. The Pyramids also help in improving concentration and quietening of the mind. There are some who claim to have witnessed a pale blue light radiating from the top of the Great Pyramid of Giza. Others have experienced an energy flowing through them when they stood at its summit. Even hats in the shape of a Pyramid are said to relieve headaches.

On his expedition to Egypt in 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte expressed a desire to spend some time all alone in the Great Pyramid. When he came out of it, to everyone's astonishment, he was "white as a sheet", pensive and deeply withdrawn. But when his bewildered aides enquired what he saw and experienced, he remained silent. Later he requested them never to remind him of the incident.

The Pyramids, "miracles in stone", have remained an enigma down the ages. No ancient Egyptian literature tells how and why they were built. Erich Von Daniken says in *Chariots of the Gods*: "Today, in the twentieth century, no architect could build a copy of the Pyramid of Cheops, even if the technical resources of every continent were at his disposal."

Perhaps, a day will come when the omniscient Sphinx will reveal the hidden wisdom and secrets of the Great Pyramid!





LET US KNOW

*** *I am scared of taking a ride on the merry-go-round, because I feel giddy when it stops and I get down. Why?***

-S. Manjubhashini, Coimbatore

The inner ear has three canals containing fluid. When the body tilts, the fluid moves this way and that, sending nervous signals to the brain. However, one can always regain and maintain one's balance at all times. While riding the merry-go-round, the fluid in the canals moves continuously. The movement persists for some time even after the wheel comes to a stop. Hence the giddiness.

*** *Which zoo in India has the highest location?***

- Maheswar Prasad, Lucknow

The Himalayan Zoological Park in Sikkim is situated at a height of more than 2,000 metres, and is spread over an area of 205 hectares. It is home to several endangered species like the red panda, black bears, and leopards. This zoo has the largest bear enclosure in the country.

*** *Does the third millennium really start on January 1, 2000? There seems to be some confusion in the various views expressed.***

-D.Lalitha Sambamurthy, Kakinada



The first millennium (1,000 years) has to be counted from, let us say, January 1 of year 1 to December 31, 1000 A.D. As such, the second millennium would have started on January 1, year 1001 and would last till December 31, 2000. Agreed? If so, the third millennium is due to begin only on January 1, 2001. That famous science-fiction writer, Arthur Clarke, subscribes to this view. Let us not cut down the second millennium by 100 years by watching the sun rise over the Katchall Island in Nicobar on January 1, 2000 or ring the "millennium bell" which China is making in Beijing that morning!



Towards Better English



A ROOM FOR A TETE-A-TETE!

Reader Mohini Puri, of Defence Colony, New Delhi is perplexed whenever she comes across mention of 'drawing room' and 'living room' in advertisements for rental of flats. She often finds the expression 'drawing-cum-dining room', though she has never found anything like 'living-cum-dining room'! What is the difference? she asks.

A somewhat similar question has been posed by Rema Nair, of Kunnampulam, Kerala: Is the drawing room a place where people draw or paint?

Well, the place where artists (painters) do their work is called a 'studio' and the place where they exhibit their work is called a 'salon'. No, Rema, no drawing is done in the drawing room, except perhaps by children as part of their home-work. In homes in England, long ago, after dinner the women withdrew, leaving the menfolk to continue drinking. The room where the ladies went was originally known as the *withdrawing room*. When the men joined them later, it was only to indicate that the guests were ready to depart, while the hosts went to the living room to listen to music or watch the TV, or to the 'study' to carry on some reading or continue with their work. Withdrawing room has now been shortened to drawing room which, in modern homes, also serves as a living room where one normally receives visitors, or guests. Now-a-days, wherever it is possible, a large room or hall is divided into a living room and a dining room.

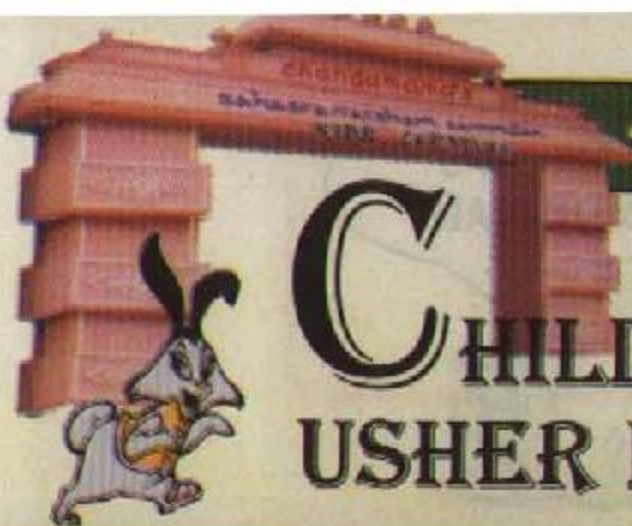
In the expression 'to make both ends meet', which are the two 'ends'? asks Bejoy Eapen of Dum Dum, West Bengal.

Suppose you get a salary of one thousand rupees and you have been able to pay for your daily food, transport to office and back, buy a newspaper and some magazines, pay the barber and the launderer, and occasionally go to the cinema, and at the end of the month you are left with a modest saving of fifty rupees, you can tell your friends that you have made both ends (income and expenditure) meet. Sometimes one finds people wrongly using the idiom 'not making both my ends meet,' which can only mean that they cannot bring their head and feet together! But acrobats in circuses are capable of doing even that.

Dinesh Karmarkar of Ghatkopar, Mumbai, writes that he recently read about a politician who has 'salted away' money in foreign banks. What does that mean? he asks.

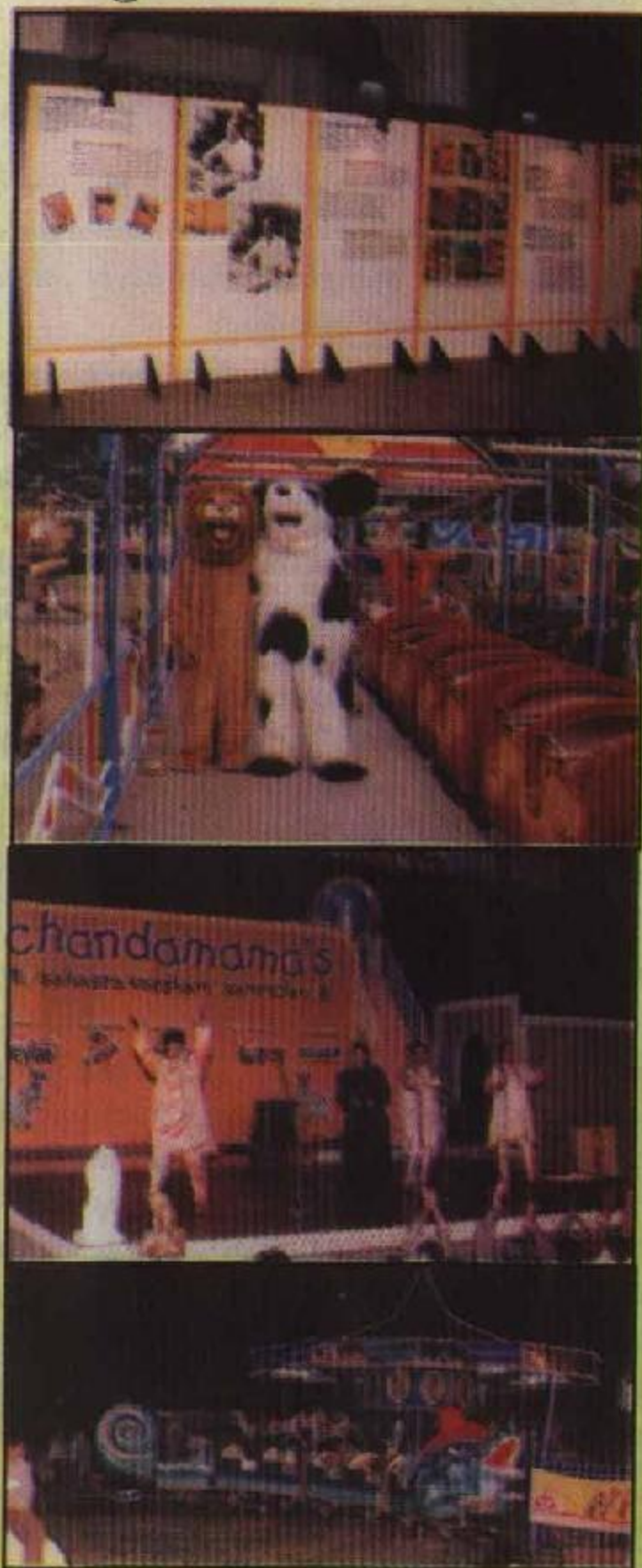
While making pickles, we add a lot of salt to the lime or mango pieces. Salt is a good preservative. Therefore, when one salts away money in a foreign bank, one can ensure that the money lies there safe till the depositor wishes to withdraw it and use it.





Sahasra-varsham sammelan Sah

CHILDREN USHER IN THE MILLENNIUM



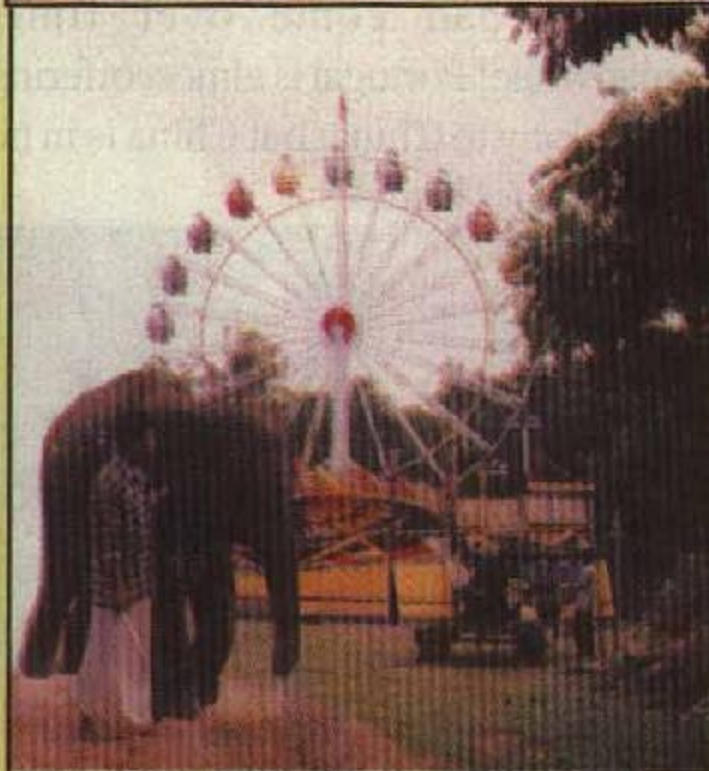
It was an event under the auspices of *Chandamama Samskriti Sanchar*, Chandamama's own Entertainment and Event Management division, exclusively for children and their families - a fun way of building relationships through events, promotions, and road-shows.

The first event - the "Sahasra-Varsham Sammelan" - was a three day carnival for children and their families. It got off to a flying start on New Year's eve at the sprawling Vijaya-Vauhini Studios, which is adjacent to the Chandamama Complex in Vadapalani. It was organised as a combined celebration of the re-launch of **Chandamama** and a New Year's family celebration. The carnival presented a happy mix of Indian traditions and technology - amusement rides, sega video games, bouncing castles, and mock film-shooting on one hand, and special *homams* (for peace and prosperity), Kili-Jyotsyam (parrot predictions), traditional Tanjavur drummers, giant Indian life-size puppets, elephants, fire-dancers, and what not, on the other.

Food and exhibition stalls, competitions and contests, prizes and gifts galore, and variety entertainment programmes were also part of the package for all three days. The highlight of the show was our own *Chandamama Pradarshan*, an exhibition of photos, illustrations, cover paintings, and text tracing the origins of *Chandamama*, featuring old issues and drawings from our archives.

At the stroke of twelve on New Year's eve, the children (for those below 12 years, the entry was free) and the elders were prompted to usher in the New Year by lighting a lamp, peeling of bells, and showering of flowers - in true Indian tradition. All in all, it must have been an amazing experience for the visitors-young and old alike.

The three day event received valuable support from PEPSI, Nutrine, the *New Indian Express*, and Jaya TV and was widely covered in the media.





The Last Colony of the Century

Which colony had achieved freedom without a revolution, be it violent or peaceful? Which place had thrown away its imperial masters without even a rebellion?

Well, the answer is Macau. It was an island belonging to China. But for 442 years past, it had been owned by the Portuguese. It was a prosperous centre of trade between that part of Asia and Europe. China was the greatest beneficiary. Innumerable Chinese goods found their way into Europe through Macau.

Goa of India was also a Portuguese colony. It had to be made free by India through a show of force. But how much change had come over time, meanwhile! Portugal is almost offering her colony to China; but China is in no hurry to get it back!

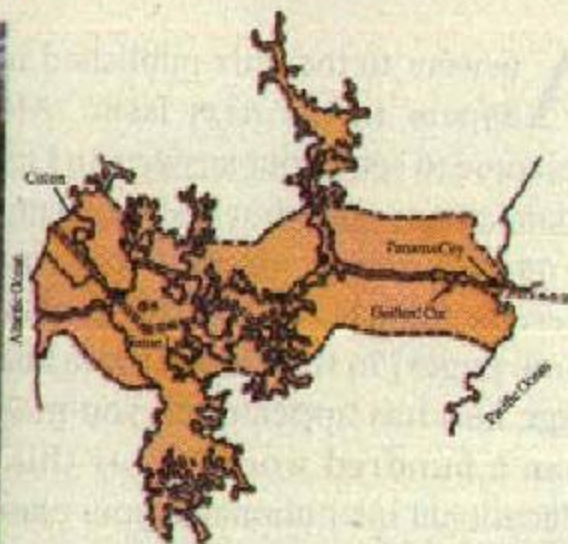
Macau, with its population of 436,000, is the last colony to be declared free in the 20th century—a century that saw the gradual collapse of colonies all over the world. At the stroke of midnight on the 19th of December this is what happened: “Four officers of the Macau security forces folded the flag and presented it to the Portuguese Governor, Mr. Vasco Rocha Vieira. Mr. Vieira clutched the flag to his chest and cast a last glance at the governmental palace which has been his office since April 1991. A spokesman said the Governor would take the flag to Lisbon, where it would be displayed at a Macau Cultural Research Institute.”

The President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, said: “I have mixed feelings. The 500 years of history go by like a film that lasts just seconds.”

That is how things happen!



GIFT (?) OF THE CENTURY



As time passes, wonders become ordinary objects. In 1914, when the Panama Canal was opened, it was hailed as one of the greatest achievements in history. Running through the country known as Panama, the canal, only 50 miles long, linked the Pacific Ocean with the Atlantic Ocean. Nearly six thousand workers died in the process of digging the canal. It made ocean voyages between New York and San Francisco 8,000 miles shorter. It increased the movement of goods in a short time more than hundred-fold.

The Panama Canal was the brain-child of President Roosevelt of the United States of America. He himself made a journey in a ship through the canal. Never before had a president of the U.S.A. left his country while in office!

Things are different today. The canal was managed by the Americans. In fact,

it was an American property. Along the banks of the canal grew up small American colonies. The American army practised shooting and tested ammunitions in a patch of forest on the bank, killing unwittingly several natives collecting wood in the forest. The people of Panama resented this.

The canal has lost its importance. Today goods are generally transported by cargo planes or roadways. Many modern ships, because of their large size, cannot pass through the canal. The Panamanians have been demanding that the canal become their property. In 1977, the then U.S. President, Jimmy Carter, signed a treaty transferring the American rights over the canal to Panama. On the 31st of December 1999, a formal ceremony of transfer took place.



DISCOVER, EXPRESS YOURSELF

Answers to the quiz published in this issue will appear in the next issue. Meanwhile you are welcome to send your answers to Discovery of India Quiz, Chandamama Buildings, Vadapalani, Chennai - 600 026. But to qualify as a contestant, you must also do an imaginative exercise: please read all the quotes and fillers (which appear on some pages) in the earlier issue and tell us which one (give only the page no.) has appealed to you most and why. Please do not use more than a hundred words to say this. Please write your age, the name of the educational institution and your class if you are a student, and your full address. Put down your signature below your answer and let it be certified by one of your parents or teachers.

1st Prize : Rs. 1000

2nd Prize : Rs. 500

Plus five
Congratulatory
prizes Rs. 200 each



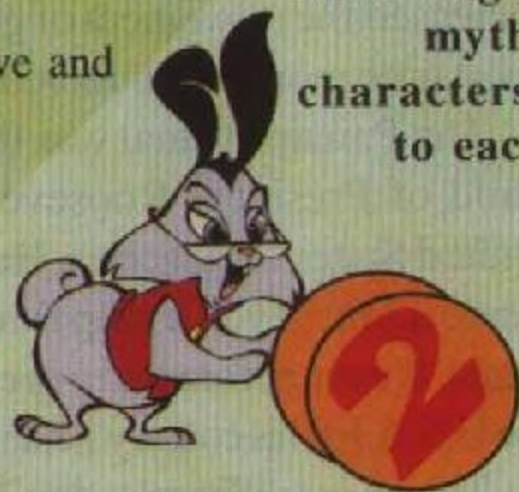
It was a stormy night. A young man, drenched and muddy, knocked on the rear door of a house on a river-bank. A young lady, holding a lamp, opened the door. "My husband! What made you cross the river and come to my father's house at this hour?" she asked.

"To live at home without you was unbearable," answered the young man.

"Only if you had for God half the love and attraction you have for me!" murmured the lady, heaving a sigh.

That very moment began the process of a great change in the young man's life. He turned towards God and in course of time became a great sage. The incident is attributed to two persons. Who are they?

How are the following pairs of mythological characters related to each other?



Chandamama: one spirit in many languages.

AND BAG A REWARD



- i. What is the first Indian work on medical science? Who is its author? When did he live?
- ii. What is the first Indian work on surgery? Who is its author? When did he live?
- iii. What is the first Indian work of history? Who is its author? To which century did he belong?
- iv. What is the first Indian work on sociology, political science, and law? Who is the author? When did he live?
- v. What is the first Indian work on the art of drama? Who is the author? When did he live?



MAY I HAVE YOUR
ATTENTION
PLEASE!

CONDITIONS :

- * Employees of Chandamama India Ltd. and their families / associates are not allowed to participate.
- * The judges' decision will be final and no correspondence will be entertained in this regard.
- * Illegible entries will not be considered.
- * The results will be published in the May 2000 issue of Chandamama.
- * Answers should reach us on or before 29th February 2000.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. Abhimanyu | - Balarama |
| b. Ugrasena | - Pradyumna |
| c. Ghatotkacha | - Sisupala |
| d. Kichaka | - Parikshit |
| e. Karna | - Subhadra |

the spirit of light and delight



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? You may write it on an ordinary post card and mail it to



PHOTOCAPTION
CONTEST

CHANDAMAMA

Vadapalani
Chennai-600 026



to reach us by the 25th of current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.



The Prize for the
December 1999 contest goes to

Kr. NITYANAND S. BHADRA
Post Box No. 12
Chinchwad, Pune 411 033
Maharashtra



The winning entry :

"Where has it gone?"—"Here it is"

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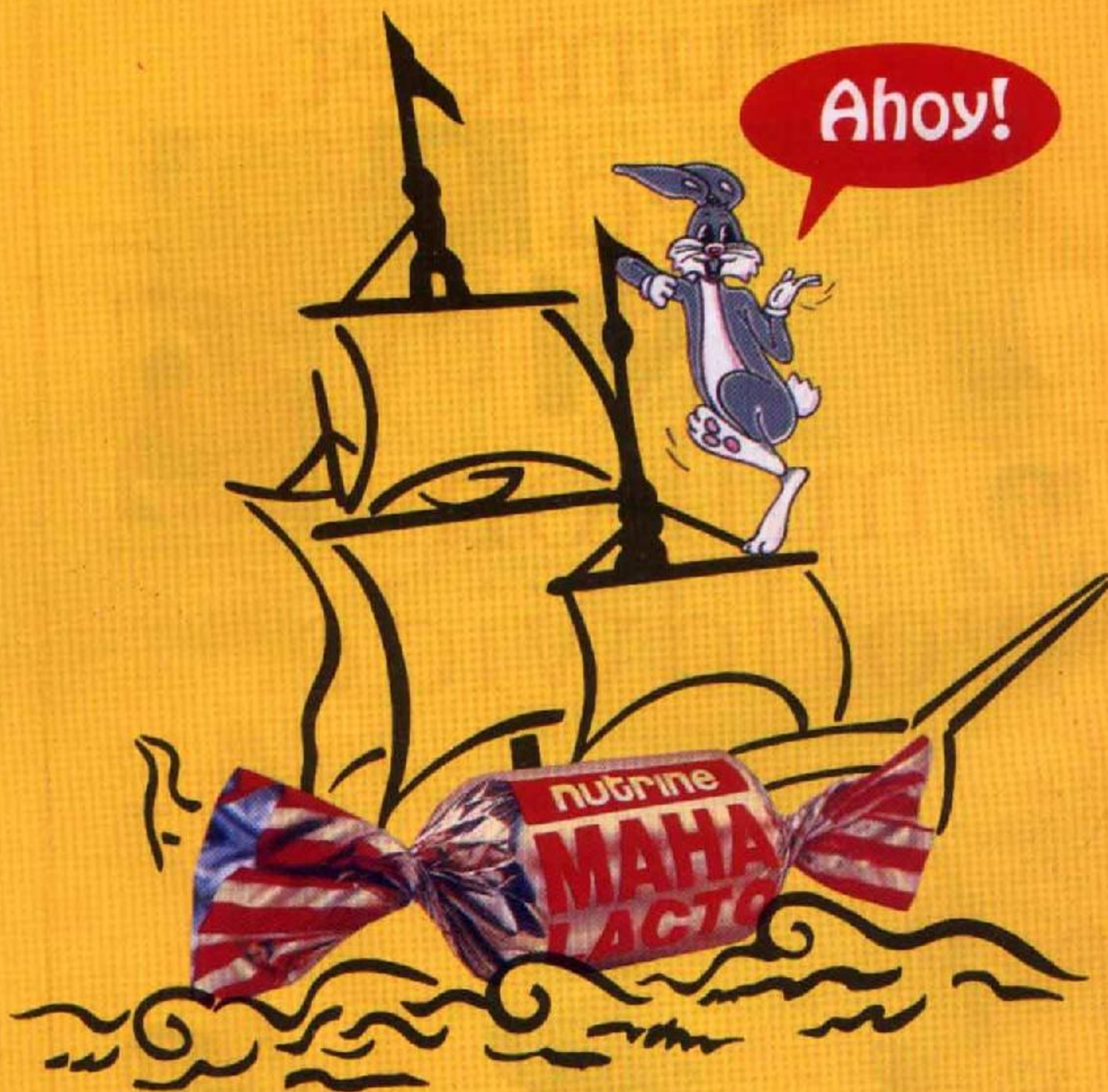
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